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THE REAL 100 GREATEST ALBUMS OF THE 90s

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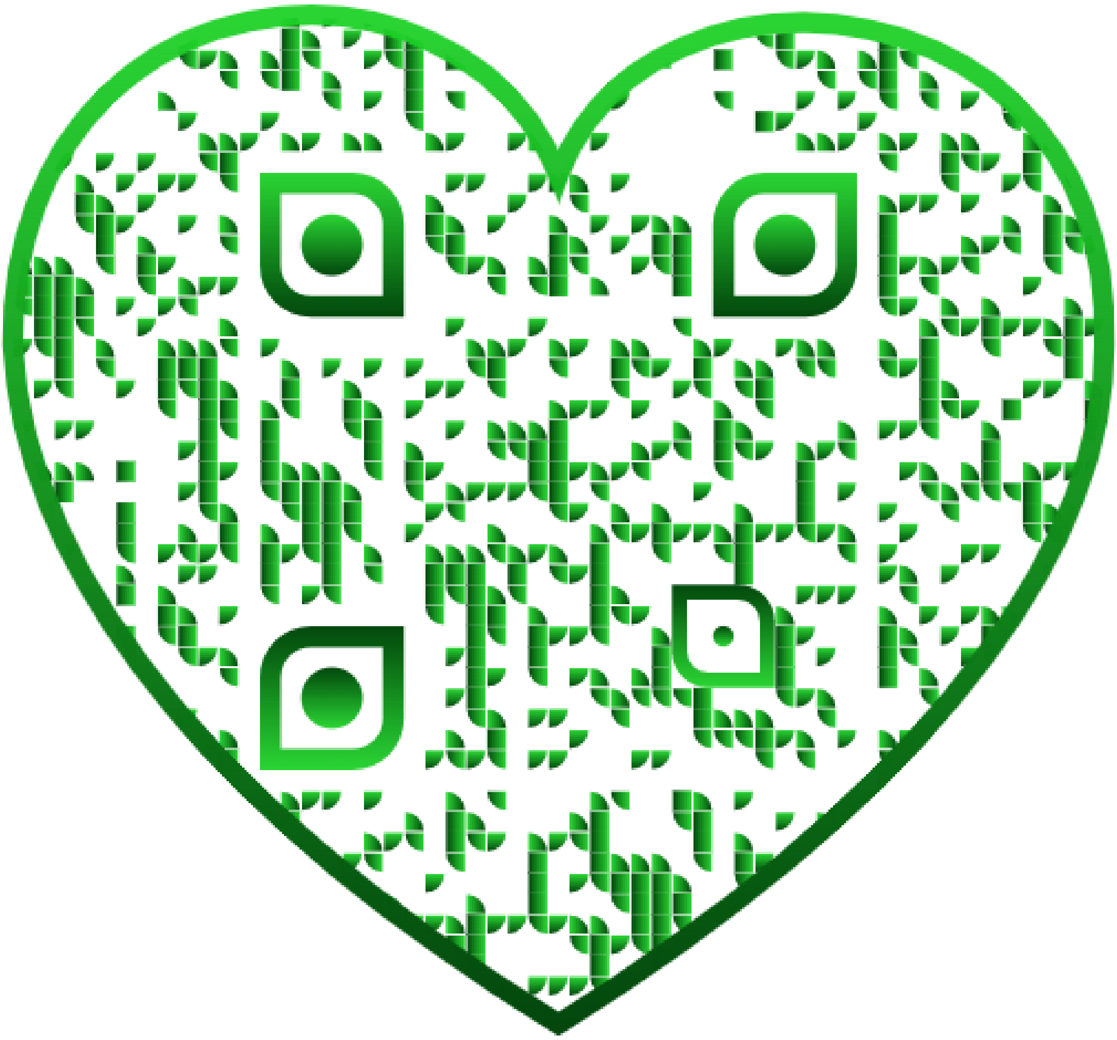
No Britpop*

The records that *really* rocked the 90s

*Well, maybe just the odd one or two...

FUTURE

ISSUE 247



THE MUSICAL TESTAMENT OF A ROCK LEGEND

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Status Quo

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RICK PARFITT

OVER AND OUT

Foto: Heiko Roith

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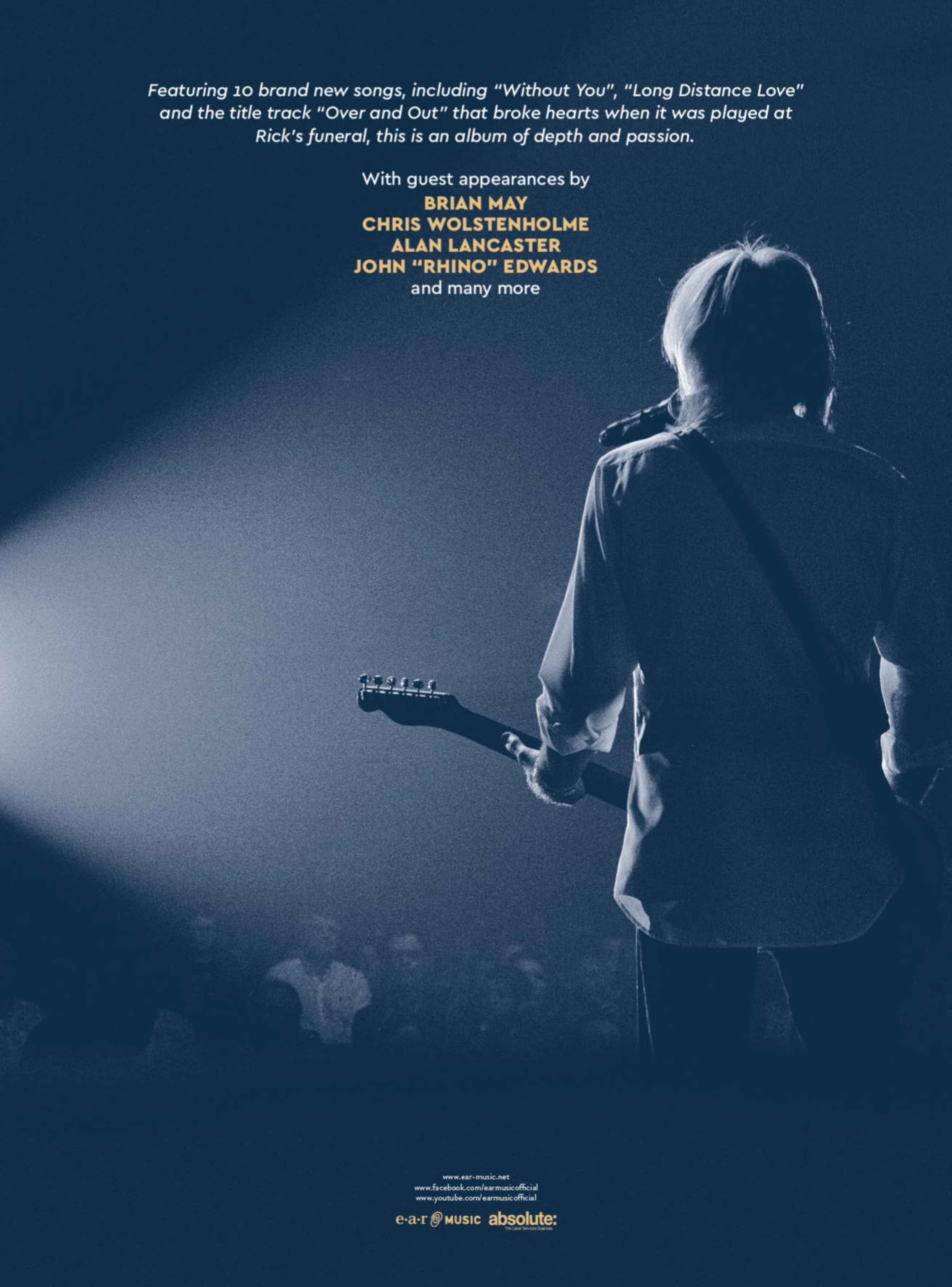
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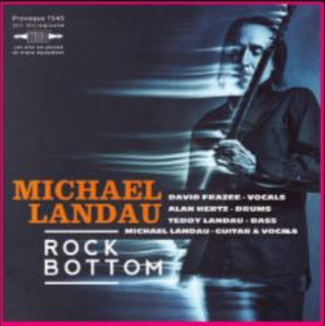

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This new album from the LA guitar legend exokes Hendrix, Love's Forever Changes and Buffalo Springfield.

Stephen Stills & Judy Collins
Everybody Knows
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American music icons celebrate 50 years of friendship with a new album brimming with rich harmonies.

Michael Schenker Fest
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Features Metallica's Kirk Hammett along with three original MSG singers - Gary Barden, Graham Bonnet and Robin McAuley.

Lance Lopez
Tell The Truth
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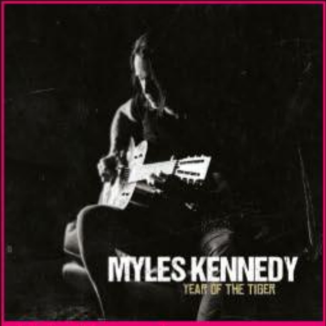
Texas six string legend Lance Lopez now unleashes his new solo album - an autobiographical tour-de-force.

Jimi Hendrix
Both Sides Of The Sky
out 9 March on CD & vinyl
A dynamic new album featuring 13 studio recordings made between 1968 and 1970 - 10 of which are previously unreleased.



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The long awaited solo album from the dynamic Alter Bridge and Slash vocalist, inspired by the loss of his father.

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Intensely personal fourth solo album from The Strokes' Albert Hammond Jr. Includes the single Muted Beatings.

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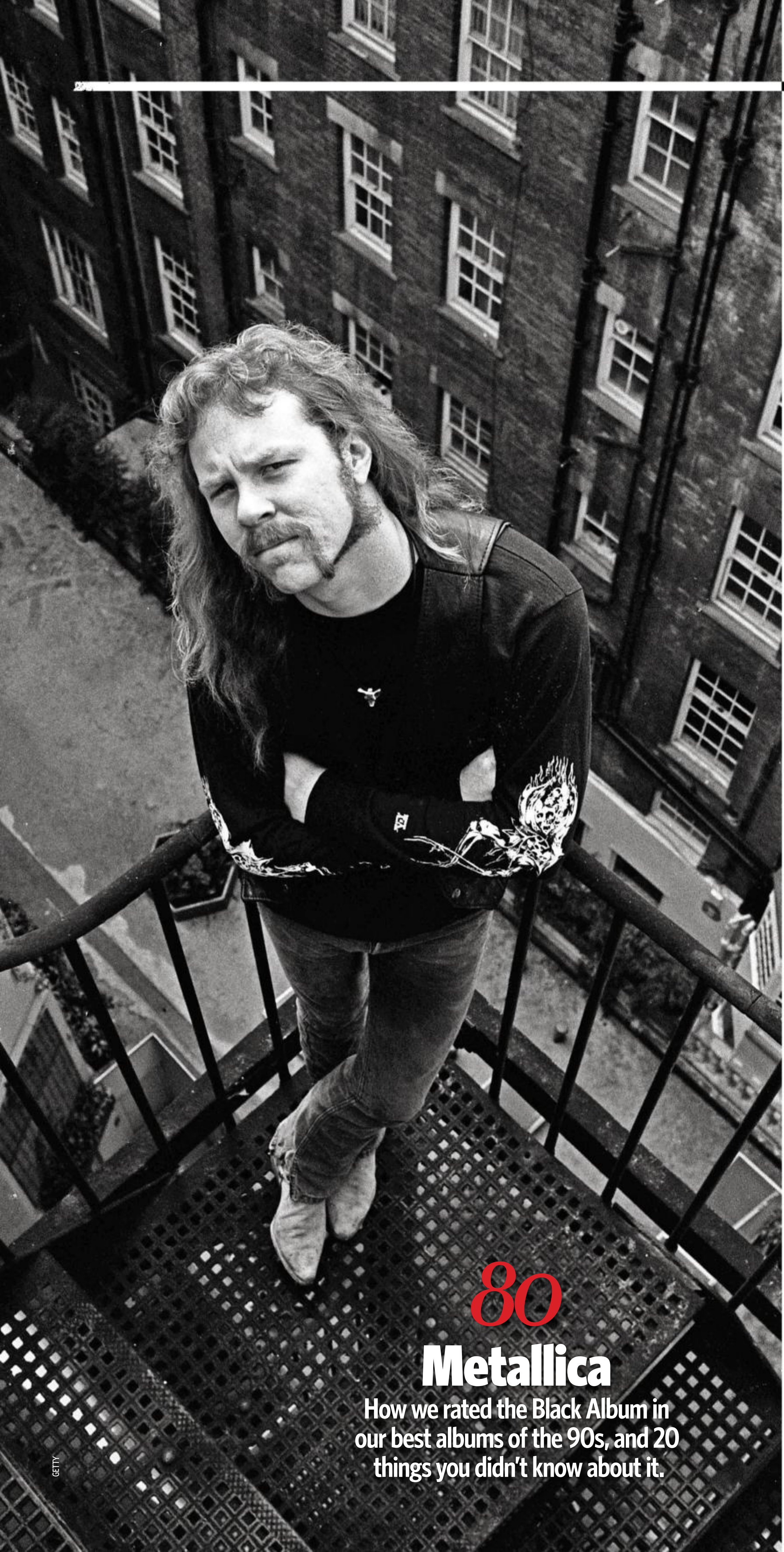

GETTY

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Can you believe that the 1990s began nearly 30 years ago? I can't. During the past couple of years, *Classic Rock* has delved deep and brought you issues celebrating both The Real Greatest Albums Of The 70s and The Real Greatest Albums Of The 80s, so it seems only right that we turn our focus to the 90s to give it its time to shine. Which is what we've done this issue.

As a fleeting thought, you may remember it as the decade when trip hop, Madchester, rave, Whitney and Mariah ruled the radio and the charts. And if rock was your jam? Well, then it was all Seattle, all of the time.

But that's a fallacy; the 90s was an amazingly fertile time for classic rock of all types: the big-hair brigade didn't die, metallers got more inventive, new prog began its incredible rise, bands tagged as 'Britpop' released albums that truly rocked, stalwarts like Motörhead and Judas Priest delivered some of the best records of their career, and grunge was a lot more than just *Nevermind*...

In our list we hope there'll be records you've forgotten about, ones that have gone on to become stone-cold classics, and maybe one or two that you dismissed at the time that deserve a revisit.

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

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This month's contributors

MALCOLM DOME
Malcolm has been writing about music since 1772... Well, 1979, anyway. He has contributed to a number of publications, written numerous books, and sleeve notes for a variety of album reissues, and occasionally pops up on radio shows and band TV/DVD documentaries. He also claims to make a damn fine cup of tea. (*He does – Ed.*)

JERRY EWING
Jerry has been bothering people about prog rock since the early 80s when he founded *Court Jester* fanzine. After that he founded the more impressive *Classic Rock* and *Prog* magazines. His new book, *Wonderous Stories: A Journey Through The Landscape Of Progressive Rock*, charts the history of the genre. He talks to Steven Wilson for this issue (p38).

PAUL ELLIOTT
Paul wrote this month's feature on Def Leppard's *Adrenalize*. He first interviewed Leppard in 1987 on their *Hysteria* tour, and wrote the sleeve notes for last year's 30th-anniversary reissue of that legendary album. Paul has been writing about another of his favourite bands for his forthcoming book *AC/DC: For Those About To Rock*, published in September 2018.

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Cover: photo: Will Ireland; typographic illustration: Steve Mitchell

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Digital
Digital Publisher **Briony Edwards**

Subscriptions
UK order line & enquiries **0344 848 2852**
Overseas order line and enquiries **+44 (0) 344 848 2852**
Online orders & enquiries **www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk**
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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 3

Classic Rock, Future Publishing plc, 1-10 Praed Mews, London W2 1QY

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future.
Distributed by Marketforce, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU. Tel 0203 787 9001
ISSN 1464783

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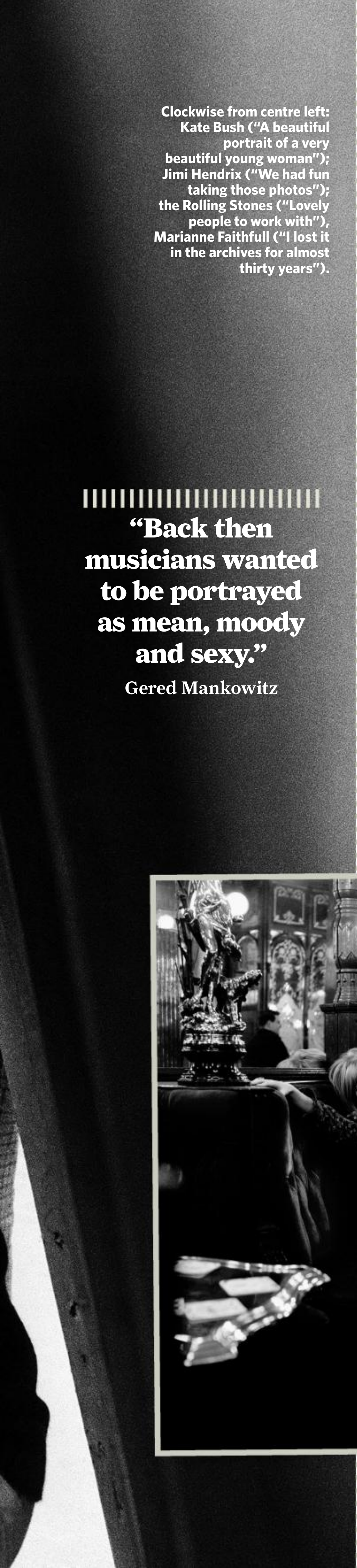


Clockwise from centre left: Kate Bush ("A beautiful portrait of a very beautiful young woman"); Jimi Hendrix ("We had fun taking those photos"); the Rolling Stones ("Lovely people to work with"), Marianne Faithfull ("I lost it in the archives for almost thirty years").

"No prima donnas, they were charming"

Veteran music photographer to spill his secrets at exhibition.

As The Photography Show returns for its fifth year, famed music photographer Gered Mankowitz assures *Classic Rock* that the days of rock photography as a viable vocation are far from over. Mankowitz has spent more than 50 years capturing images of some of the world's most famous faces, and is aware that with the overwhelming rise of digital photography – especially fans taking snaps at concerts – his is a job that many of us believe we could do ourselves.

"The takeover of digital has certainly devalued the profession of the rock photographer," he admits. "An image on a tiny, colourful phone screen can look very beautiful, but there will always be a need for talented music photographers. Social media is all well and good, but a CD or album sleeve or a poster is impossible without work of a professional quality. It's getting tougher to make a living at it, though. It's still a viable career path, but college or university are probably the best ways to go."

"Back then musicians wanted to be portrayed as mean, moody and sexy."
Gered Mankowitz

Along with other photographers at the top of their game across fashion, photojournalism, wildlife and landscape, Mankowitz is among the guest speakers on the Super Stage at this year's Photography Show and will be in conversation with "somebody whose identity I can't yet reveal", discussing his career in photography, conducting a question and answer session and, of course, sharing a few tips. "I will be talking about the five or six main artists with whom I've been associated – including the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Kate Bush and Marianne [Faithfull] – in a behind-the-scenes sense," he explains.

Mankowitz, who in 2013 published a book called *50 Years Of Rock And Roll Photography*, is working on a project with Christian Furr, who was the youngest person ever to paint a portrait of The Queen. For details go to furrmankowitz.com. He also has a book called *Breaking Stones: 1963-1965, A Band On The Brink Of Superstardom*, collated with photographer Terry O'Neill.

Here are his comments on just a few of his famous photographs (opposite page) that will be on show at The Photography Show.

(Main image) "This was the cover of a Rolling Stones album called *Out Of Our Heads*, released in 1965. It was my very first session with the band, in February of that year. They came to my studio in Piccadilly, and next door there was a huge building site. What you can see is the hoardings used to block it off at night. I used their fantastic triangular shape and it made a great cover.

"When I knew them the Stones were lovely people to work with, all very easy and co-operative – no prima donnas, not even Brian Jones… at that point. They were charming."

(Top left) "Jimi again, also taken at my studio in Mason's Yard, off Piccadilly. Jimi was a very smiley chap. He laughed a lot. Back then musicians wanted to be portrayed as mean, moody and sexy… but we had fun taking those photos. It was early 1967, *Hey Joe* was about to become a hit, he had a bright future ahead, and I don't think Jimi was ever in as good a space again as he was at this particular moment. Within weeks he began to get groomed [to be a star], and in doing so he lost that extraordinarily natural authenticity."

(Centre left) "A shot from *The Kick Inside* album cover session [1977] – a beautiful portrait of a very beautiful young woman. I wanted Kate to look as stunning as *Wuthering Heights* had sounded. When I first heard that sound it was completely unique, it stopped me in my tracks. I wanted to create something related to dance, because that was something so important to her. When she came out of the dressing room wearing those dancer's clothes, that's just how she looked – beautiful."

(Left) "This is Marianne Faithful, taken in the Salisbury pub in St Martin's Lane [London] in 1964. It's still there and pretty much unchanged; they even have that photograph above the bar. Look carefully and you can see some blokes reflected in the mirrors behind her. And because of that Decca Records rejected the shot as a record cover. I then lost it in the archives for almost thirty years. Finding it again, I realised it was good and that the people in the background added something extra – a frisson, if you will." **DL**

The Photography Show is for professionals, amateurs and students alike. It takes place at the NEC in Birmingham from March 17 to 20. For more information, visit www.photographyshow.com

This month The Dirt was compiled by Ian Fortnam, Rob Hughes, Emma Johnston, Dave Ling, Will Simpson, Philip Wilding

RIP

Thank you
and good night.

Mark E Smith
March 5, 1957 – January 24, 2018

The Fall's irascible leader has died at the age of 60. Known for his dark humour and provocative demeanour, Smith formed the post-punk band in Manchester in 1976. Over the years he hired and fired 66 members, and the band released 32 studio albums.

Pat Torpey
December 13, 1953 – February 7, 2018

Pat Torpey played drums for Ted Nugent, Robert Plant, Richie Kotzen and more but is best known as a co-founder of Mr. Big. He continued to record and perform live with Mr. Big despite developing Parkinson's. He was 64.

Jim Rodford
July 7, 1941 – January 20, 2018

Rod Argent has led the tributes to his cousin and bandmate in the Zombies, who died after a fall on the stairs. "Jim was a wonderful person," he said. "He will be unbelievably missed." In a six-decade career, Rodford, 71, was also a member of The Kinks and Argent.

Dave Holland
April 5, 1948 – January 16, 2018

After the 69-year-old Dave Holland passed away due to as-yet unknown causes, Glenn Hughes described his former Trapeze bandmate as "an incredible drummer and a great guy". Holland went on to play on some of Judas Priest's biggest albums.

Dennis Edwards
February 3, 1943 – February 1, 2018

Edwards joined The Temptations in 1968, replacing David Ruffin, and remained with them until 1977. He sang on many of their hits including *Papa Was A Rolling Stone*, *Ball Of Confusion* and *Cloud Nine*. The 74-year-old had battled meningitis.

George Butler
March 13, 1948 – January 28, 2018

The Dirty Strangers and Pink Fairies drummer has passed away aged 69 after a short illness. He also worked with Ian Dury, Pete Townshend, John Lee Hooker and Elvis Costello.

Neil Harris
Died 28 January 28, 2018

Harris was the guitarist of London-based punks Sham 69 from their inception in 1975 until '77. He joined an alternative version of the group in 2011. Harris, 63, had been battling cancer.

NEWS

Quofest Ireland, an event to honour **Status Quo**, takes place at Kavanagh's Bar & Venue in Portlaoise over the weekend of May 5/6. Attractions include live sets from Rhino's Revenge and the Matchstick Men.

Former Judas Priest guitarist **KK Downing** is the latest rock star to write an autobiography. Due in September and, according to the guitarist, "[delving] backstage into the decades of shocking, hilarious, and haunting stories that surround the heavy metal institution", *Heavy Duty: Days And Nights In Judas Priest* tells the story of his 42 years with the group, which he left in 2011.

Black Stone Cherry release their sixth studio album, *Family Tree*, on April 20 via Mascot Records. The self-produced set includes 13 songs and features a guest appearance from guitarist Warren Haynes on the track *Dancin' In The Rain.*

Rush guitarist **Alex Lifeson** (pictured) plays on the track *Il Mostro Atomico* on Fu Manchu's new album, *Clone Of The Universe.*

Bad news for music lovers in the south west – the **Bristol Bierkeller** has closed its doors for good. The venue had staged gigs by artists such as Nirvana, UFO, Janes Addiction, Tool and many more.

Stone Temple Pilots, now with new lead singer Jeff Gutt, release a new, self-titled album on March 16 via Rhino.

WELCOME BACK

Doctors Of Madness

The punk-influencing band return, and this time they'll remember to lock the dressing room doors.

Having imploded in 1978, punk progenitors the Doctors Of Madness return with a touring line-up that features original frontman Richard 'Kid' Strange, alongside violinist Urban Blitz and Japanese rhythm section Susumu (bass) and Mackii (drums). Renaissance man Strange has forged a career portfolio of significant scope from instigating Cabaret Futura, to acting (*Batman, Harry Potter*), promoting, writing, teaching, you name it.

Did you initially put the Doctors Of Madness together as a vehicle for your poetry, or did you see the band's music as a cinematic setting for prose?
Absolutely. Our sound was always cinematic. When we were recording our first album, I'd say: "We're making cathedrals of sound." It was as pretentious as hell, but the idea was to construct vast edifices of noise, abrasion and tumultuous sturm und drang.

Post-*Ziggy*, the Doctors' theatricality was at a premium, but punk's arrival engendered an almost puritanical embrace of authenticity.
I was always hobbled by a lack of musical virtuosity, but I had balls and imagination, and thought: "I want something multi-sensory, to overstep the line between making music and making noise." I wasn't worried about controversy or shock, I liked it. Maybe Alice Cooper and Iggy had gone before, but there was no blueprint. We didn't know how to market it, we just went out there as if we were a normal band, which we patently weren't.

Meanwhile, the landscape changed around you.
Come seventy-six, we got our first album out and were playing to six-to-eight hundred people a night. I got a call from my agent, saying: "I'm being pestered by a manager in London who wants to put a band in the provinces to get experience. They're called the Sex Pistols. Can they support you?" So they came up to Middlesbrough, and not only did they rob us while we were on stage – went through our pockets – but while they were on stage they nicked my career as well.

> **"Sex Pistols played with us. They stole our cash and career."**

Didn't Steve Jones eventually give your money back?
Well, don't tell them but both Steve and Johnny gave me back the full amount individually. I haven't broken it to them yet because I'd like to quit while I'm ahead.

The Doctors' catalytic influence on punk is undeniable.
Dave Vanian, Penetration, TV Smith and Gaye Advert used to come to see us. The Jam, Skids, Simple Minds and Joy Division supported us. So while it was an honour to be supported by those bands it was rather galling to see The Jam and Damned go on to the next level and we never did.

A modicum of success can be a trap.
If we'd had one hit record, I might have ended up locked into a cycle of reunion tours and I wouldn't have worked with Jack Nicholson, Tom Waits or Damien Hirst. So my failure as a rock star has been the greatest thing that ever happened.

I'd say you're busier than ever, but you've always been busier than ever.
[Laughs] Yeah, I think I feed off the energy activity provides. Sometimes you do feel like you're flying by the seat of your pants, but sometimes it's the only way to fly. **IF**

The Doctors Of Madness tour with Lily Bud and Sister Paul from March 22.

ALEX LIFESON: KEVIN NIXON

> "My kind of upbringing has given me life skills that others might not."

★ HIGH HOPES

Ruby Boots

The Perth-born, Nashville-based wanderer flips a middle finger to personal tumult.

"I DON'T HAVE as much angst or pain as I had maybe five or ten years ago," discloses singer-songwriter Bex Chilcott. "There's a sense of self-preservation and resilience that I've learned to harness. I can now write about a lot of my life experiences in a different light."

The 36-year-old is talking about the emotional landscape of new album *Don't Talk About It*, recorded under her alias Ruby Boots. It's a record that balances raw vulnerability with fierce vigour, a meeting of twangy Americana with burning rock'n'roll. Chilcott's redoubtable voice is every inch as pliable as the moods she conjures, ranging from kick-ass sneer to soulful ache.

Recorded in Dallas with Lone Star collective the Texas Gentlemen, *Don't Talk About It* is a significant step up from Ruby Boots's 2014 debut, *Solitude*. "I put a lot of expectations on myself with this record," she says. "It was more of a deeply-rooted intuitive thing. I was trying to write about personal things that I felt would also resonate with other people, be it a hook, a lyric or a fucking middle finger in the air at a heartbreak."

Raised in Western Australia, she endured a difficult early life, leaving home at 14. She admits she fell into "bad company" for a while, before finally heading up the coast and working on pearl-fishing boats, setting in motion a highly nomadic existence.

"I think my mum tried to do the best she could, raising three children on her own," she reflects. "Battling her own demons at the same time made it all too much for her. Subsequently we were out of home pretty early. But that kind of upbringing has given me life skills that other people might not have. I have the ability to leap out of a suitcase, because it can't be any scarier than it was back then. It's a walk in the park, comparatively, to being 13 and not knowing where the fuck you're going to sleep at night."

The only constant in her life was music. Having been obsessed by Nirvana, Silverchair and Pearl Jam as a teenager – "grunge really helped soothe a lot of my anger" – Chilcott discovered Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, as well as homegrown talents such as The Waifs and Powderfinger. Either side of employment on yachts in the south of France, she spent the early 2000s busking in Europe, including a spell in Newquay and open-mic nights in Edinburgh.

It was only in 2012, when her touring schedule landed her in Nashville, that Chilcott found somewhere to put down roots. Now resident in Music City, she's found the perfect creative setting for her outlaw sensibilities.

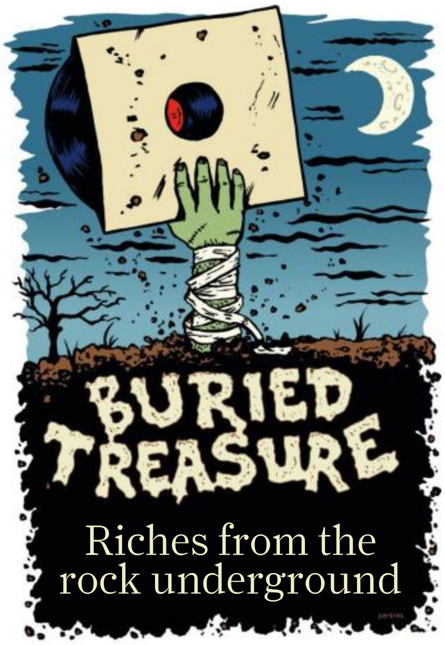
"Having that freedom of spirit has given me the opportunity to stumble around until I found the right path," she says. "And putting together a personal body of songs can uncover what you've learned and who you've become. It's almost like those records are bookmarks of your life." **RH**

Don't Talk About It is out on February 9 via Bloodshot Records.

FOR FANS OF...

"I discovered *Pearl* in my mid-teens," Chilcott explains. "Janis was singing like I felt. She just wanted to tear her soul away from inside of her and spit it out through her voice. For someone who was going through very tumultuous times, feeling very misunderstood and unloved, it spoke directly to me."

CAL QUINN/PRESS



TROYKA

Troyka, Cotillion Records, Canada, 1970. £100.

Troyka is a weird and wonderful, primarily hard rock album, but which defies description and is all the better for it.

Formed in the Canadian town of Edmonton, from the ashes of garage rockers the Royal Family, Troyka consisted of three musicians of Ukranian descent. It's clear that this was a trio who understood each other well and that their craft had evolved out of intensive jam sessions. The album has a large portion of mind-bending instrumentals, from gorgeous slices of psychedelic rock (*Beautiful Pink Eyes*) to funky jazz-rock (*Life's OK*), trippy semi-classical (*Early Morning*) and traditional Russian folk (*Introduction*).

Apparently it was the wild and raw singing style of drummer/vocalist Michael Richards that caught the attention of Atlantic Records A&R department, leading them to be signed

'There's a controlled anarchy behind their bizarre chemistry.'

to its subsidiary Cotillion. His gravelly tone adds caveman rowdiness to the fuzzy acid blues of *Natural* and the garage dirge of *Rolling Down The Road*.

Lyrically, Troyka didn't seem to take things too seriously and there appears to be quite a bit of satire going on (*Rub-A-Dub-Dub Troyka In A Tub,* for example).

For all its diversity, ambition and madness there seems to be a controlled anarchy behind *Troyka*'s bizarre chemistry, making it very listenable. Skillful musicianship helped, too.

Unfortunately the band fell apart following the untimely departure of guitarist Robert Edwards towards the end of 1970. **LD**

NEWS

Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow release a double live album and DVD, *Memories In Rock II*, on April 6 via their own label Minstrel Hall. It's taken from concerts from last summer. The release is preceded by a newly recorded studio track, *Waiting For A Sign* that's available as a single – the band's first since 1996.

James Hetfield is to appear in *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil And Vile*, a film about the notorious serial killer Ted Bundy. The Metallica frontman plays Officer Bob Hayward, a "no-nonsense Utah highway patrol veteran" who arrests Bundy on suspicion of burglary. Zac Efron takes the lead role.

Lynyrd Skynyrd, **Slayer**, **Sir Elton John** and **Paul Simon** have all announced that 2018 will be their last year of touring as we know it. However, Ozzy Osbourne says he will not be quitting the road after his summer tour that includes headlining Download Festival. "I'm not retiring; I'm still going to be doing gigs," he says.

Led Zeppelin's 50th anniversary illustrated book, *Led Zeppelin By Led Zeppelin*, is published by Reel Art Press on October 2. It marks half a century since the band changed their name from the New Yardbirds to Led Zeppelin. It contains 368 pages and costs just shy of 50 quid.

Look out also for an expanded, remastered version of the band's 2003 live album *How The West Was Won*, out on March 23.

WALKING PAPERS: DEAN KARR/PRESS

WELCOME BACK

Walking Papers

The Seattle supergroup, including members of GN'R and Screaming Trees, return with quality second album.

It's five years since we last heard from Seattle's Walking Papers, the supergroup featuring GN'R's Duff McKagan on bass, Screaming Trees' Barrett Martin on drums and the Missionary Position's Jeff Angell and Benjamin Anderson on vocals and keyboards respectively. A listen to new album *WP2*, which was finished at Josh Homme's Pink Duck studios in California, proves it was worth the wait. Martin explains how it came about, and opens up about his globetrotting extra-curricular activities.

What was the vision for the *WP2* album?
We wrote the record on the road. We would use our sound-check to work on riffs. Duff would have a bass riff or I would have a drum rhythm, and he and I would start playing together. We'd record it with our iPhones, then we would email it to everybody. I love playing with Duff. He and I are a natural rhythm section. And I think Jeff wrote some of the best songs of his life for that record. Really, really good lyrics.

"There's no time for fake or bad music that has no message."

You and Duff must go way back?
Yeah, we almost started a band in ninety-six or ninety-seven, before he did Velvet Revolver. At one point we jammed with Sen Dog from Cypress Hill and we were going to do a rock band with a rapper. It predated rap-rock. But it's a good thing we didn't, because that might be a genre that shouldn't have happened.

What effect does him being in Guns N' Roses have on Walking Papers?
We can't really tour right now, that's the hard reality of it. Duff still has stuff going on, and he'll be touring with Guns N' Roses in the summer. I can't tour right now because I'm in the middle of producing albums for people. Right now we're just focusing on getting the record out and letting people know about it.

You published your book *The Singing Earth* last year. Tell us about that.
It encompasses thirty years of my musical life, travelling to six continents to play music or study music. It's a bit about drumming and percussion, but I talk about the way the environment is changing with global warming, how it's effecting the local communities, so it's part memoir, part travelogue, part world-music book.

You've spent time with the indigenous Shipibo tribe in the Amazon, how was that?
I did my thesis on the shamanic songs of the Shipibo, which are used to cure and heal people. We did ayahuasca, which is the really powerful psychedelic from the Amazon, with the shamans. It's a sacred ceremony about going into your internal mind and spirit, looking for answers to questions you might have been wrestling with your entire life. It's the most powerful experience I've ever had. Out in the jungles and deserts, that's where there's a lot of deep wisdom and teachings.

Is there any conflict between that side of your life and the rock persona?
Pretty early on in life I realised I wasn't going to be the drug-addicted mess of a rock star. If you're really going to be anti-establishment and do something powerful, then probably you should be very educated and clear-minded and you should be self-empowered. The artist should always be speaking out, because human rights is always in a state of evolution. There's no time for fake or bad music that has no message. We're out of time. **EJ**

WP2 is out now via Loud & Proud.

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Rock 'n' Roll accessories

This month, @jamiehibbard is elegantly wasted in these three sartorial stand-outs.

Cooper Collection Clifford jacket
This is based on vintage utility jackets from the Lee Cooper archives – namely a 1940s biker jacket – so the style ticks a lot of boxes. Featuring a selvedge detail internal chest pocket and a curved collar, this is a great combo with raw denim jeans.
£350 @LeeCooperTCC
TheCooperCollection.lc

Wood Wood X Vans Old Skool shoes
Collaborations are a huge deal in streetwear, and help brands to get a lot of attention with different audiences. The Wood Wood X Vans collab is to celebrate the former's 15th anniversary, with two versions – obviously we like the black one best. We particularly like the scribbled-on soles for a nice rebel touch!
£103 @W00dW00d
WoodWood.com

Heron Preston Skull tee
Big, bold print tees are all the rage right now, and you don't get much bigger or bolder than this one from Heron Preston.
£165 @HeronPreston
HeronPreston.com

NEWS

It has been announced that Glenn Tipton is to step down as a touring member of **Judas Priest**. "I am not leaving the band, it's simply that my role has changed," he says. A decade ago the guitarist was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Tipton's place is being filled by Andy Sneap, co-producer of the band's new album *Firepower* and a former member of Sabbat.

Presented in association with the European Space Agency, **Space Rocks** is a new endeavour celebrating space exploration and science, art and music. Astronaut Tim Peake, a noted Marillion fan, is among those confirmed to appear and there will be live music from Lonely Robot and Charlotte Hatherley (formerly of Ash). It takes place at London's IndigO2 on April 22.

Love/Hate's **Jizzy Pearl** releases a new solo album, *All You Need Is Soul*, on May 11 via Frontiers. Pearl will undertake a tour of the UK and Ireland in May.

Mott The Hoople (pictured) have been confirmed as the Saturday night headliners at Ramblin' Man Fair on June 30. The line-up will include Ian Hunter on vocals, guitarist Ariel Bender and keyboard player Morgan Fisher, plus backing musicians.

Blackberry Smoke release their sixth studio album, *Find A Light*, on April 6 via Earache Records. Guests on the record include the US blues guitarist Robert Randolph on *I'll Keep Ramblin'*.

WELCOME BACK

Tony Banks

The Genesis man prefers to write classical music and stay out of the limelight, and not read colleagues' books.

With his latest solo record, *Five*, Tony Banks has returned to one of his first loves: the orchestral album. It follows 2004's *Seven: A Suite For Orchestra* and 2012's *Six Pieces For Orchestra*, as well as 2015's all-encompassing solo work box set *A Chord Too Far*. While other Genesis alumni Steve Hackett, Mike Rutherford and even Phil Collins have made their way back into the limelight, Banks, by his own admission, likes "to relax and know that everyone is looking at someone else on stage. I don't want to be the centre of attention".

It's fair to say that you're the most overlooked solo artist from Genesis.
I suppose so. When it comes to the more classical stuff, I seem to have got more of a niche going. It would be nice to have an audience to write to, and that's what's a bit more frustrating with the other solo albums I've done. But I think this is more of a natural thing for me to do, these orchestral pieces, and I'm very happy to do them.

Do you still get excited by creating new music?
God yes. For me it's always been the writing that's given me the biggest thrill. When we were working as a group it was the same thing. You feel you've hit on something and it really works for you, it really gets you going.

The box set reminded me how much I like your film score work. Why did you stop doing that?
Not been asked, sadly. I don't think anyone comes knocking any more. I think you have to do the knocking, and I've never been very good at that. Mike Rutherford, for example, he's very good at putting his foot in the door.

"I can do the gags, it's mainly the playing I don't want to do."

Have you been to either a Phil Collins or Mike And The Mechanics show?
I saw Phil at the Albert Hall. It was good. I think he got a lot better as it went on. The band was fantastic, but he is very static these days and he can't quite do what he used to do; he can't do the tambourine dance any more, and I used to like that. I could just sit and doodle for a bit while he hit his head with the tambourine. Mike did a great show too, and I'm particularly fond of Andrew Roachford. He's a very good singer. I really enjoyed them doing [Roachford's 80s hit] *Cuddly Toy*.

Did you read Phil's autobiography? It was quite revelatory in places.
No. I read Mike's book and I didn't like that very much, so I've decided not to read Phil's book. I think Steve [Hackett] is doing a book and I won't read that either. I'll keep it even and not read any of their books. I felt that Mike's book was a bit dismissive of me, actually, and I told him that and he just muttered a bit. We're still friends. It was inaccurate, for a start, there was a lot in there that wasn't right, and he passed over certain moments that I thought would have had a bit more time dwelt on them. It's not a big deal, I just think the trouble is that when you read stories about yourself, even if it's good you don't like it in a way, it never sits quite right.

Will we see An Evening With Tony Banks show any time soon?
What I'd really like is for someone else to do it. I'm not a fan of the focus being on me. I'd rather be a part of the orchestra than front and centre. I can get up there and do the gags, it's mainly the playing I don't want to do. **PW**

Five is available now via BMG Records.

TONY BANKS: KEVIN NIXON; IAN HUNTER: ROSS HALFIN/PRESS

"We wanted to do something that pushes the envelope for rock'n'roll."

★ HIGH HOPES

The Glorious Sons

These boys from small-town Canada write heartland rock singalongs for the 21st century.

Springsteen had Asbury Park, Canada's fast rising the Glorious Sons – who meld Boss-like storytelling with the urgent riffing and drawled vocals of latter-day Kings Of Leon – have Kingston. The small town that incubated and inspired them sits on the north shore of Lake Ontario; its best (nay, only?) claim to rock fame being that it's the birthplace of Bryan Adams. What it isn't known for is a thriving local scene.

"It's a lot of hobbyists; a lot of people who are talented but they literally never leave," shrugs Glorious Sons frontman Brett Emmons, who did leave but came back, and who has just written a semi-concept album about the town – and album that could well provide the band with their international breakthrough.

The Sons were formed back in 2011 by Brett's elder brother, guitarist Jay, who was always determined his sibling would join him in the group. They're currently a five-piece, but very much led by the two brothers. "At that time I was living out in Halifax (Nova Scotia), doing some solo stuff. I kept on saying no cos I was stubborn and wanted to do things my own way. Then I went home at Christmas when they had their second show. I watched it and thought: 'Holy shit! These guys are actually pretty good.'"

So Brett returned to Kingston, joined up and started writing about what he saw. The resulting second album, *Young Beauties And Fools*, is "all about people making mistakes, fucking up and paying the piper," he explains. "It's the bad, the ugly and the beautiful stuff that comes from real lives. All the songs are inspired by specific people, though I can't say who otherwise I'll be in trouble next time I go back."

The album is furnished with singalong choruses and contemporary production touches. The likes of *My Poor Heart* span pretty piano, punchy beats and driving guitars, while *Everything Is Alright* is an air-punching alloy of earnest acoustic strumming and strident 21st-century arena rock. "We've done the whole meat-and-potatoes rock thing," says Emmons. "But we were also thinking: 'What does rock'n'roll sound like in 2017?' There are too many throwback acts around. We wanted to do something that pushes the envelope for the genre."

This month they play headline shows in the UK (March 5-7), after spending much of the past five years building a following in North America. It was a band-forging period that included a tour when their bus broke down at the start of the Canadian winter.

"We were between Alberta and Saskatchewan in December. The only thing we could rent was a truck with just two seats in it – one for a driver and one for a passenger," Brett recalls. "We had to sleep in it for two weeks while we finished the tour. There were no lights, no heating, one blanket and a couple of mattresses. But we had no other choice than to come together like a family. If we'd quit on that tour we wouldn't be the band we are today." **WS**

Young Beauties And Fools is out now via Earache Records.

FOR FANS OF...

It's easy to make the link between the characters on *Young Beauties And Fools* and the cast of misfits and dreamers on what is Brett's all time favourite album, *Born To Run*.

"Springsteen is a huge inspiration," he says. "He caught and created a scene and he made you feel it completely. He moved you with those stories."

ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

Ramones

Rockaway Beach

After moving to New York to escape an abusive father, pre-Dee Dee Ramone Doug Colvin wrote a song about the coastal escape he enjoyed and frequented, and it became a Ramones classic.

Words: **Kris Needs**

"Who, me? Naaaahh!" Dee Dee Ramone lets out a goofy cartoon chuckle at the very idea of the Ramones hanging ten on surfboards, but confesses he always liked to go to Rockaway Beach, as immortalised in the band's classic song of the same name.

Sitting next to him in a dressing room on the Ramones' December 1977 UK tour, Joey giggles at the very thought, although Johnny confirms Dee Dee as "the only real beach-goer" in the Ramones and acknowledges the surfing elements that started creeping in on previous single *Sheena is A Punk Rocker* (Joey's self-described "first surf/punk rock teenage rebellion song"). "It's a surfing-type song so we wanted to get a surfing sound on it" Johnny states, in typically blunt fashion.

Rockaway Beach blew a pure ocean breeze through the band's downtown cobwebs, joining their then-new album *Rocket To Russia*'s demented take on the Trashmen's *Surfin' Bird* and wide-eyed version of Bobby Freeman's *Do You Wanna Dance*, as covered by Joey's beloved Beach Boys in 1965.

Rockaway Beach became the favoured hangout for young Doug Colvin (later aka Dee Dee Ramone) after he escaped with his mother from an alcoholic father in Germany and moved to New York City when he was 15. He saw Rockaway Beach and its enormous amusement park as his private escape.

Rockaway Beach was one of 14 songs the Ramones took into New York's Mediasound studio in August 1977 for their third album, later titled *Rocket To Russia*. Although the album was ostensibly produced by Tony Bongiovi and drummer Tommy Ramone (who was about to leave the band to take a back-room studio role), it was engineer Ed Stasium who had the task of translating the Ramones' torrential live sound on to tape. Dissatisfied with Bongiovi's production on previous album *Leave Home* (which he also engineered), Stasium remembered the "room sound" ambience techniques he'd learned from watching Roy Thomas Baker, and thought they would work brilliantly at Mediasound, a converted Baptist church on West 57th Street.

"It was a huge room, almost cathedral-like," remembers Stasium, who has masterminded *Rocket To Russia*'s spectacular reissue, complete with out-takes, live recordings and 40th Anniversary Tracking Mix that captures the Ramones as they sounded in the room. "When I went in there I thought: 'I'm going to use this room sound and ambience that Roy inspired me to do.' As well as close-mic'ing the band out in the studio, I put up room mics to capture them live. The room sound picked up everything, and doing the tracking probably took two days.

"When Bill Inglott, my co-producer on these box sets who finds the multi-tracks in the Warner Brothers vaults, transferred the tapes to digital, the first thing I did was listen to the room sound. Holy mother of pearl, it sounded amazing. When we originally mixed the album we didn't incorporate that room sound too much, it was just lying beneath. But what a revelation hearing those tracks now! Those mixes are the band in the studio, live; an in-your-face, bare-boned tracking mix, just the band going at it in the studio, captured by those room microphones. No double-track vocals, guitar overdubs or background vocals; all Ramones all the time, balls-to-the-wall."

"No double-track vocals, guitar overdubs or background vocals; all Ramones all the time, balls-to-the-wall."

Stasium remembers *Rockaway Beach* as first song recorded at the sessions, but cites opening track *Cretin Hop* as his perfect encapsulation of the album regarded by most as the Ramones' best. "It's a funny song, so typical of the Ramones with the lyrical content and hilarity of it. It's pure driving Ramones; the way it starts off the record with that E-to-A chord progression and they slam into it. It's very powerful; minimalism at its best.

"We just started recording, and those are the songs that we picked. I had always thought that the version of *I Don't Care* on the original album was a newer version, but when I got to the multi-tracks recently I realised the version we cut at Mediasound was never used and we used the B-side [to *Sheena Is A Punk Rocker*] version on the original album. The anniversary album track is the first time it's been released. It's a little slower and a different sound. The multi-tracks of the [single versions of] *Sheena* and *I Don't Care* have disappeared, but fortunately we have this version."

Stasium is very aware that, with all four Ramones who recorded *Rocket To Russia* now deceased, he is responsible for their magnificent legacy. The *Rocket To Russia* reissue bodes well for similar treatments planned for *Road To Ruin*, the Phil Spector-produced *End Of The Century* and, hopefully, all five concerts recorded for *It's Alive*.

"Who would have thought after recording them forty years ago that in 2017 I would literally still be working with them; going through the multi-tracks, finding this great stuff and putting out these lovely box sets? People might diss it and say: 'Ah, you're just a money grabber', but I don't look at it that way at all. This is a great treat for true fans of the Ramones who'll love this stuff, and I'm so proud to be associated with the legacy. These are the definitive remastered box sets for each of these albums."

Even if the Ramones never surfed, *Rockaway Beach* will never lose it's crested-wave sparkle and resonance. When the shore front was devastated by 2012's Hurricane Sandy, the song was used in a radio ad for the rebuilding fund, Dee Dee's quintessential Ramones lyrics spilling out once more: *'Chewin' out a rhythm on my bubblegum/The sun is out, and I want some…'*

Rocket To Russia: 40th Anniversary Deluxe Edition is out now via Rhino.

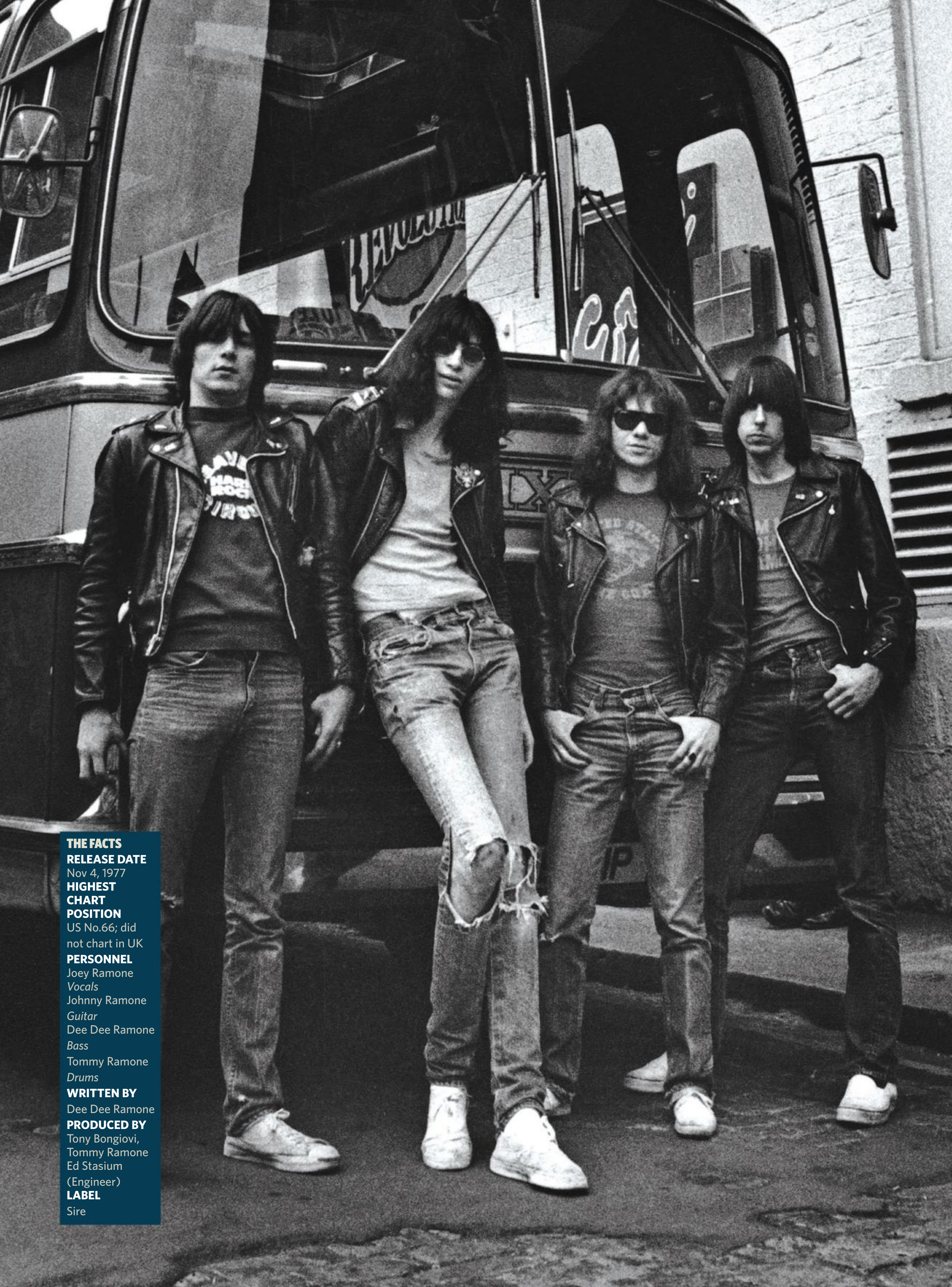
TOMMY GONE

Rocket To Russia was the last Ramones studio album recorded with Tommy Ramone, the manager who became a drummer to get the band he had envisioned as a living rock'n'roll artwork up and running.

Tommy hated touring, and found it increasingly hard to deal with Johnny's militaristic bullying, and initially wanted to assume a Brian Wilson-style back-room role, producing and writing.

The new arrangement worked for the follow-up, 1978's *Road To Ruin*, recorded with new drummer Marc Bell (Marky Ramone) and co-produced by Tommy and Ed Stasium. But after 1980's Phil Spector-produced *End Of The Century*, Tommy was gone, signalling the end of both an era and the magic for original die-hard Ramones fans.

GETTY



THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
Nov 4, 1977

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
US No.66; did not chart in UK

PERSONNEL
Joey Ramone
Vocals
Johnny Ramone
Guitar
Dee Dee Ramone
Bass
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Q&A

Myles Kennedy

Alter Bridge's frontman and Slash's singer on loss, almost being in Led Zeppelin and thankfully not being a Kardashian.

Words: **Henry Yates**

Every hard rocker has a heartfelt acoustic album inside them. The seeds of Myles Kennedy's, *Year Of The Tiger*, were sown back in 1974, when the early death of his father left him bearing a devastating emotional load. But the singer's double duty with Alter Bridge and Slash's solo band means it's only now that this long-delayed record has arrived, announcing a rootsier flavour and an unflinching honesty. "There were things I needed to get off my chest," Kennedy tells us, "and that's why this record was so cathartic."

You threw out your first attempt at this solo album. That's pretty brave.
Well, either brave or stupid. But I had to trust my instincts and go with my gut. I wanted this to be stripped-down, acoustic-based, more about the vocal and songs. The record I had started to record was too heavy. I decided this just wasn't the right time for it.

The concept for the *Year Of The Tiger* album was inspired by the death of your father. What happened?
As a child, we were Christian Scientists. And they tend to rely more on prayer than they do medicine. So my father got sick but he never saw a doctor, never had it treated, and then passed away. He was so steadfast in his faith that we ended up losing him.

How hard did his death impact on you?
Losing a parent at a young age has a profound effect on a person's life. As a young man, things started happening in my head and I didn't know where they were coming from. I didn't understand how a traumatic event that happened during very formative years can affect you, and can end up chasing you down in your adult years. So that was something I had to deal with – and am still dealing with.

How tough was it to write about that subject?
More emotional than I realised. *The Great Beyond* was especially challenging, because that song paints a picture of the night my father actually passed away. Other songs, such as *Blind Faith*, are almost like letters to my father. And they're very direct. I don't hide.

***Ghost Of Shangri La* is about your house being burgled?**
Yeah, correct. It was a few weeks after dad passed away. We were out of town and somebody broke into the house and stole some stuff, including my father's stereo equipment, which he'd built himself.

So many rock musicians have lost parents. That can't be a coincidence, can it?
Yeah, you're right, it's definitely a common thread. Everyone from Bono to Jeff Buckley – the list goes on and on. Maybe you're chasing something down, and that's why you fall into the creative side.

How do you feel about organised religion now?
That's a tough one. Organised religion is something I don't take part in any more. But I understand how much of a benefit it is for people. As the lyric goes: '*Whatever gets you through the night, it's alright.*' I've also heard the term 'the opiate of the masses'. If it brings you solace, go for it. My issue is if your religion thinks it's the only way to salvation, and you end up hurting people in the process.

You're not a father yourself, are you?
I have two dogs, and I feel like a pretty good father to them [laughs]. But to be an artist is selfish, and it requires a lot of time and effort. And to bring a child into the equation, to me, just didn't feel appropriate. I know what my work ethic is, and to say that it's a little obsessive is an understatement.

***Year Of The Tiger* has a very different vibe to Alter Bridge.**
There's a lot of things I listen to that I haven't had a chance to express in the hard-rock entities I'm a part of. I guess it really started for me when I discovered the Eric Clapton *Unplugged* record. That opened up an entire world to me. Whether it was Big Bill Broonzy, Mississippi John Hurt, Robert Johnson… it was this idea of a man and a guitar against the world. That really captivated me. Who else? The more acoustic side of Zeppelin, and then, to fast-forward, Chris Whitley was a massive influence and you can definitely hear that.

If you could relive any six-month period, which would it be?
I would probably go back to ten years ago, just to experience one more time jamming with John Paul Jones, Jimmy Page and Jason Bonham. That's something I often replay in my head.

Supposedly some of it was recorded. Will it ever be released?
No, no, it was never officially recorded. They were just jams.

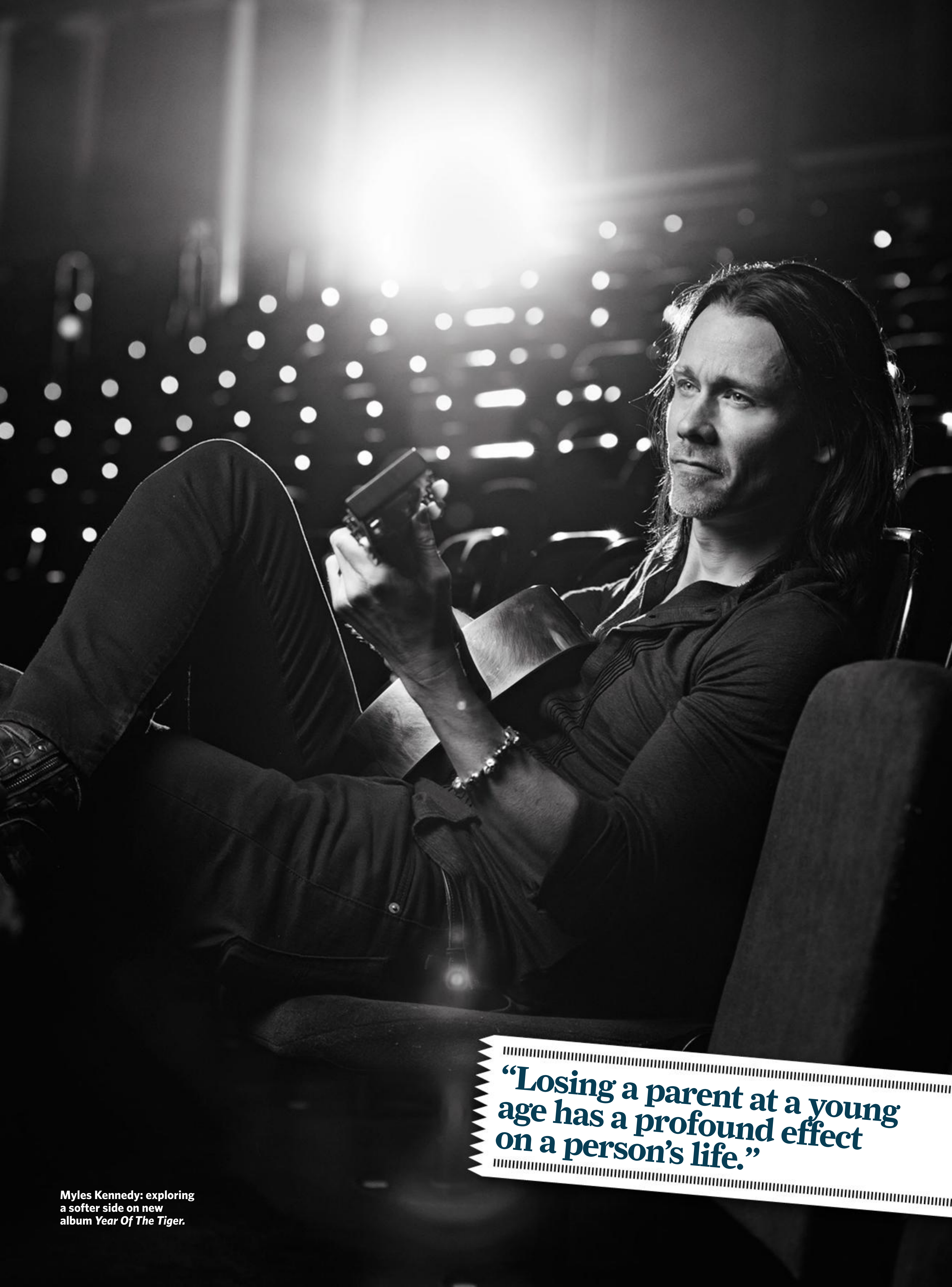
What's the hardest thing about being a recognisable face?
Well, I have it good. Where I am in the grand scheme of things, I can walk off the stage, walk down the street, go grab a coffee. Maybe one or two people might recognise me, but it's not like I'm a Kardashian.

You haven't acted since 2001's *Rock Star*. How do you rate your performance?
I'm definitely not an actor. Even that scene, it's not really 'acting', it's just me being me. If they wanted me to be a serial killer, I don't think I could tap into something like that.

Could you play material from the new album at Download?
Boy, that's a good question. I would probably turn it up. It's a different kind of power.- It's a different kind of intensity.

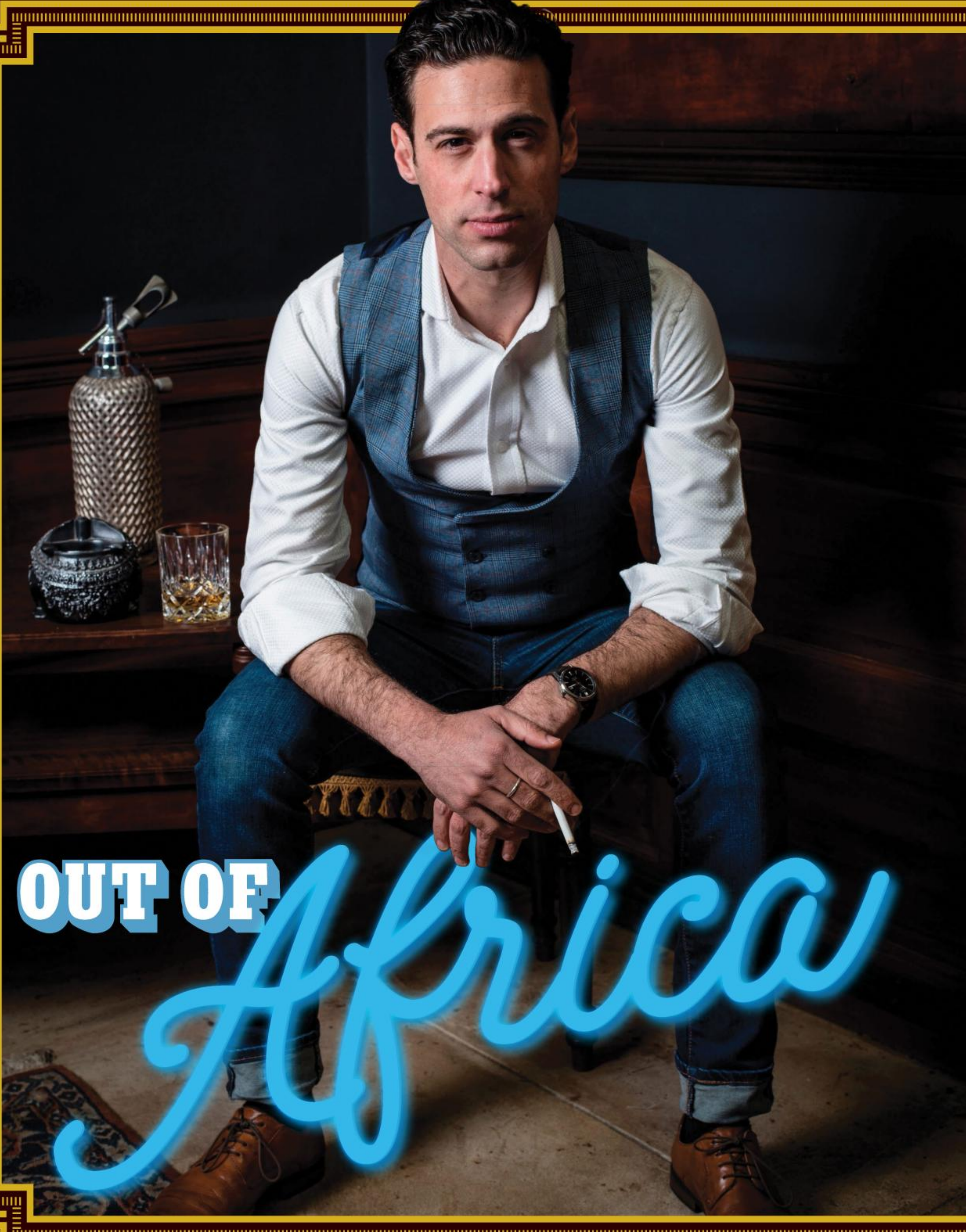
Speaking of playing live, what's the worst on-stage experience you've had?
I had so many. One time in San Francisco with the Mayfield Four, I was rocking out, tripped on my pedal board, fell off the stage, and I'm laying on my head in front of a thousand people. But it wasn't the worst thing in the world. If you're playing music, how bad can it be? It's like pizza. Even when it's really bad it's still good.

Year Of The Tiger is released on March 9 via Napalm.



> "Losing a parent at a young age has a profound effect on a person's life."

Myles Kennedy: exploring a softer side on new album *Year Of The Tiger*.



OUT OF Africa

Growing up against a backdrop of rave culture and political tensions, and battling personal demons along the way, South Africa's prime blues-rock export **Dan Patlansky** hasn't had an easy ride to success.

Words: **Polly Glass**

"I'm sick of people saying: 'I really like the album but live it's so much better,'" Dan Patlansky says earnestly. It's a backhanded compliment that many musicians have had given to them.

With his new record, the Johannesburg virtuoso guitarist/singer sought to address this apparent disparity, by bringing some on-stage je ne sais quoi into the studio. The result is the self-produced, appropriately titled *Perfection Kills*, a swaggering, sharp-eyed amalgam of the non-purist blues rock he deals in. "When you try to make something perfect, you end up polishing away the imperfections where the magic lies," he offers.

We're catching up in a guitar shop on a free day on a UK tour on which he's supporting British blueser Joanne Shaw Taylor. Last night, playing at London's Royal Festival Hall, both had to overcome obstacles (she was ill, he had a power outage), which helps to show why they're two of the genre's stand-out performers.

"Often, magic lies in live shows, a lot of this energy that isn't on albums, because there's no going back and fixing a note or doing studio tricks," he offers. "I wanted to capture a bit of that edge [on the record], that looseness that happens live."

It's not easy to stand out in the densely populated current blues guitarist scene, but Patlansky succeeds more than most. With an impassioned, Lenny Kravitz-leaning voice and dazzling guitar-playing prowess, he has a wealth of chops and ideas informed by classic rock, jazz, pop and funk as well as blues. A short, lean guy with a genial expression, his wiry physique and charisma are the product of cigarettes and guitar workouts. All of which, combined with the simple fact of where he comes from – South Africa isn't exactly known for churning out blues rock stars – has helped separate him from the dextrous blues guitarists spilling out of YouTube. This need to push the envelope, to bring something different to the table, isn't lost on him. "If you make a classic blues rock album or a classic blues album, so many people in the world do that so damn well, how are you going to get noticed doing that?" he reasons.

Patlansky's first six albums, the first of which was released in 2000, were only really acknowledged back home in South Africa. Come 2014, however, the more tune-focused *Dear Silence Thieves* album – a vibrant, funked-up injection in the modern blues world – opened him up to the wider public. Accolades ensued, followed by a support tour with Joe Satriani and the momentum-building album *Introvertigo* in 2016. Having "toured the crap out of" that record, he spent much of last year doing an acoustic tour of South Africa. "Acoustic's not my first love, definitely," he says, laughing. "It's hard work but it was really cool. It was more a storytelling show, and [as a player] it builds up a lot of strength."

His audiences, as at these shows with Joanne Shaw Taylor, tend towards the older side. Does it concern him (as a still young-ish 36-year-old) that, as is often the case with blues shows, he's not looking out at a new, younger generation of fans?

"It does in a way," he says. "I mean, maybe the ratio is heavier on the older side at the moment, but especially in South Africa I also see a lot more young people coming to the show. I always say it's thanks to people like the Black Keys and Jack White, who made that old-school blues thing cool again. They packaged it in a way that made teenagers go: 'Wow, this is pretty cool.'"

Patlansky, too, is repackaging the blues, albeit in a different way. Building on base influences such as Stevie Ray Vaughan and BB King, he's soaked up the jazzy sensibilities of bass great Jaco Pastorius, Robben Ford and Danny Gatten. "Danny was a Tele player, a country player, but he added a whole lot of jazz to it. It was *insanity*!" he enthuses.

"When you try to make something perfect, you end up polishing away the imperfections where the magic lies."

Such tastes made him unusual growing up in Johannesburg, a lot of which boils down to South Africa's fraught political history. Apartheid was still in force throughout Patlansky's primary-school years, during which pupils were put in segregated classes. Post-apartheid, in his school the fanatical anti-Satanist Rodney Seale preached against the dangers of rock'n'roll, and even fellow students called Dan a Satanist for listening to Led Zeppelin and AC/DC records, which his music-loving Jewish parents imported from overseas. There wasn't a culture for live music, he says, and when his friends did start going out it was to raves rather than rock gigs.

"It is becoming part of our culture now, as the younger generation grows," he explains, "but because of our past, getting people to come out of the rave club to a live show was almost impossible."

Patlansky's home life was essentially "very privileged", but the surrounding tensions impacted on all South Africans on some level. And, as he suggests, without being at all dramatic about it, they still do.

"Being in South Africa it's only a matter of time until you witness horrific crimes and horrible things," he says. "I mean, it's not that uncommon to see a dead body on the road in South Africa, just lying dead next to the road. I went down to the corner store the other day to get a pack of cigarettes and there was a dead guy there, a homeless guy who'd died. It's sad that that's not a massive shock to the system any more. I remember as a kid seeing a dead body for the first time. It was traumatic. Now it's like: 'Oh, it's a dead guy…' It's weird being desensitised to that."

Patlansky's real personal demon, however, has been anxiety. Not helped by the crime and fractured climate around him, it pushed him into an increasingly bleak, withdrawn state. As he started playing seriously, it continued. Things got "really bad" between his 2014 album *Dear Silence Thieves* and 2016's *Introvertigo*, which prompted him to finally see a doctor about the problem. But, next to his bright, positive stage persona, his anxiety isn't an obvious side to him.

"In the eighties the attitude was like [rolls his eyes] 'Just get on with it!' And the older I got, the more anxious I got, and anxiety turns into depression eventually…" he trails off. "It got to a point where I used to feel almost sick leaving my house, just going to do a press day in South Africa, or going to a radio studio. It wasn't the stress of doing the interviews, it was the stress of being out the house."

These days he's on daily medication, and much happier for it, no doubt aided by his wife and two children. Back home, when not engaged in band business he hosts guitar weekends in rural settings where fellow guitar devotees convene for workshops, lessons and jams. With his life so heavily tied to the instrument, you wonder whether he has an addiction rather than a job.

"When I get time off, at first I've got to force myself to practise, but when I get into it it becomes an addiction. I feel guilty if I don't play for at least four hours a day," he says. "But I like the feeling of being addicted to practice, because of the results. It's a fantastic addiction."

Perfection Kills is available now, self-released. Dan Patlansky tours the UK from March 15 to 21.

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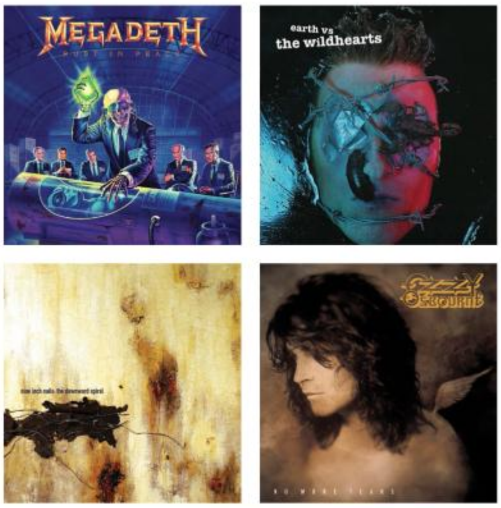
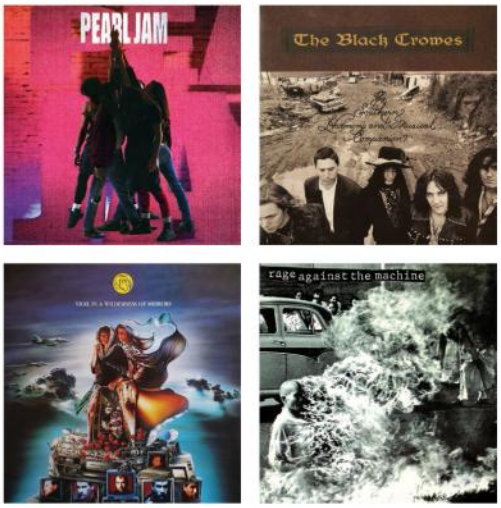
THE REAL 100 GREATEST ALBUMS OF THE 90s



Think you know the greatest albums from this often musically derided decade? Over the next 50 pages we present the albums that *really* mattered.



Words: Rich Chamberlain, Bill DeMain, Malcolm Dome, Dave Everley, Ian Fortnam, Polly Glass, Paul Henderson, Paul Lester, Dave Ling, Siân Llewellyn, Paul Rees, Henry Yates

Welcome to our epic rundown of the *Real* 100 Greatest Albums Of The 90s. The rules are simple:

1. ONLY ONE ALBUM PER BAND/ ARTIST Yeah, we know there are a handful who made more than one brilliant album in the 90s, but that would be boring. We're giving the other guys a chance.
2. NO TRIP HOP. NO BAGGY. NO BRITPOP* Rave, electronica, the Bristol sound, Madchester... they're all synonymous with the final decade of the 20th century. But we've chosen the records that *really* rocked the 90s – including the unsung classics and hidden gems, so expect the unexpected.
3. JUSTIFY IT Why should you care? Well, we're about to tell you.

*Okay, maybe there's a few, but only ones that *truly* rocked our world.

All clear? Good. Now dig in and enjoy...

AWAKE IN A DREAM
ELEVEN
Morgan Creek, 1991

100

The debut from a trio that included former Chili Peppers drummer Jack Irons and Chilis-associate guitarist/vocalist Alain Johannes, this 'missing in action' pop-daubed alt.rock gem sparkles from beginning to end with songwriting that is sharp and clever, and tracks as catchy as a flu epidemic. At a time when grunge was the new god, here was a band preaching something that sounded shiny-new while visiting the church of classic pop-rock and soul. **PH**

What they said at the time: ***"The hooks don't just please, they pummel."*** *Chicago Tribune*

SONGS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION
DEPECHE MODE
Mute, 1993

99

With this, their eighth album, Depeche Mode completed the transformation begun on 1990's *Violator*, and during which they mutated from fey electro-popsters into a full-force, black-hearted, stadium-filling, goth-rock juggernaut. A shift both given voice and exemplified by frontman Dave Gahan, cast here as Basildon's answer to Trent Reznor, soul-baring, self-loathing, ruinous appetite for pharmaceuticals and all. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"The songs make desire more desperate, and more alluring than ever."*** *New York Times*

FROSTING ON THE BEATER
THE POSIES
DGC, 1993

98

On their third album, Seattle's Posies squared the circle between power-pop and grunge. *Dream All Day, Solar Sister* and *Flavor Of The Month* – one of the greatest opening triple-salvos of the decade – have the fractured dynamics and melodies of Big Star, but with a metallic sheen and dense, heavy sound. **PL**

What they said at the time: ***"Beer-guzzling rowdy dudes consider them wimps, but their disgust is laced with envy."*** *Spin*

DYNAMITE MONSTER BOOGIE CONCERT
RAGING SLAB
American Recordings, 1993

97

New York punks in cowboy threads, Raging Slab gave the stagnating southern rock scene a much-needed cool modern makeover and a shot of attitude. *Dynamite Monster Boogie Concert*, their fifth album (not a live album, despite the title), grooves and glows with thrilling boogie heat, with energetic belters sitting comfortably aside alt.countrified violin and bango. There really isn't a bad track in sight. **PH**

What they said at the time: ***"They rocket boogie into a new decade while retaining its primal force."*** *Chicago Reader*

GET A GRIP
AEROSMITH
Geffen, 1993

96

Aerosmith bought into the 1990s philosophy: *Get A Grip* was glossier than anything they had done in the 1970s, its hit singles *Crazy, Livin' On The Edge* and *Cryin'* were written with outside songwriters and there's no doubt that the band's hard rock edge was diluted. However, get past that and it remains a wonderful album. Sales-wise it outperformed everything Aerosmith released before or since. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"Daring, diverse and brilliant every once in a while."*** *RAW*

WEEZER
WEEZER
DGC, 1994

95

As far as debut albums go, this one takes some beating. With the so-called Blue album, Weezer showed that the geeks could inherit the earth if they dared. Hiding its yearning heart behind huge hooks and sugar-rush melodies, it's a record that has been often imitated, but never bettered – not least by Weezer themselves. **RC**

What they said at the time: ***"Absolute geek-rock, out and proud."*** *Blender*

THE SOFT BULLETIN
THE FLAMING LIPS
Warner Bros, 1999

94

The Flaming Lips made their commercial breakthrough with this experimental but lushly powerful meditation on mortality and dread, science and spider bites. With his Neil Young-in-space whine, Wayne Coyne brought a sense of wonderment, magically enhanced by multi-instrumentalist Steven

Drozd, who conjured a new kind of phantasmagoric Americana. **PL**

What they said at the time: *"The combination of the emotional and experimental is more wonderful than it's ever been."* NME

THE HEAT

DAN REED NETWORK

Mercury/Polygram, 1991

93

Dan Reed knew his band's third album was their last roll of the dice after two critically adored but commercially unsuccessful records, but any desperation was kept at bay with the kind of joyous positivity that grunge would stamp out. It swung between sinuous funk rock (*Baby Now I*) and heartfelt balladry (*The Salt Of Joy*), even tossing in a left-field cover of Pink Floyd's *Money*. It was too little too late, but it was a hell of a way to go. **DE**

What they said at the time: *"Overall* The Heat *is a massive step forward for the band."* RAW

THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

NINE INCH NAILS

Island, 1994

92

NIN mainman Trent Reznor recorded the bulk of his second full-length album in the house at 10050 Cielo Drive, Los Angeles where in August 1969 actress Sharon Tate and four friends were slaughtered by members of Charles Manson's Family. By turns frenetic and haunted, *The Downward Spiral* distilled whatever spooked atmosphere that place retained into a 65-minute assault on the senses. **PR**

What they said at the time: *"Existential pain expressed as rock-and-roll and a new kind of loud."* Rolling Stone

GRACE

JEFF BUCKLEY

Columbia, 1994

91

When singer-songwriter Jeff Buckley decided to take what became his final, fatal swim in the Mississippi River on May 29, 1997, his recorded legacy amounted to just one album – but what an album. Drawing equally on Van Morrison, Led Zeppelin and Édith Piaf, *Grace* announced the arrival of a stellar new talent, one whose voice could ascend from earth to heaven in a fraction of a second. The music he wrote was fantastic, but it was as an interpreter of other people's songs – *Lilac Wine* (as made famous by Elkie Brooks), Benjamin Britten's *Corpus Christi Carol* and especially Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* – that he truly shone. An inspiration for everyone from Muse and Radiohead to Jimmy Page. **DE**

What they said at the time: *"He sounds like a man who doesn't yet know what he wants to be, and his uncertainty is what holds* Grace *together."* Rolling Stone

SUEDE

SUEDE

Nude, 1993

90

The defining pre-Oasis catalyst for Britpop, *Suede* concocted a taut, zeitgeist-defining distillation of heroic glam, fumbled suburban sexuality and pharmaceutical escapism. Evocative lyrics propelled by dynamite hooks, soaring falsettos and stratospheric guitar crescendoes are further intensified by the tangible rivalry between vocalist Brett Anderson and guitarist Bernard Butler. **IF**

What they said at the time: *"From Bowie and* The Smiths, *Suede have taken an alien sexual charisma and brazenly good tunes."* Q

IN THE HEART OF THE YOUNG

WINGER

Atlantic, 1990

89

Following the lasciviousness of their debut album's hit *Seventeen*, Winger sought some muso credibility but also needed to repeat their previous album's multi-platinum sales. With the Seattle explosion on the horizon the odds were stacked against them – and any band having their record produced by hair-metal guru Beau Hill – but tracks such as *Rainbow In The Rose* showed that with *In The Heart Of They Young* the band had achieved clear artistic growth. **DL**

What they said at the time: "In The Heart Of The Young *sees Winger caught between two bases, and frankly it isn't very good."* Kerrang!

TONY MOTTRAM/ICONICPIX

Q&A KIP WINGER with WINGER

***What goals did Winger set themselves with* In The Heart Of The Young?**

[Laughs] I had no specific goals. Back then I largely didn't know what I was doing. Nobody had expected us to sell two million copies of the debut, and we sold close to a million of the second one. Direction-wise, the band felt like it was time to do something that was a little more progressive.

Rainbow In The Rose *ticked that box, but did less discerning listeners just think it was more of the same?*

The album was way bigger in Europe than it was in the States, and I consider European fans to be way more attentive listeners, so that maybe says a lot.

What about Beau Hill's production on the album?

It's perhaps a little light, and grunge music was on the horizon, so it got caught in the crossfire. There was too much sampling on the drums. I'd like to remix it some day and boost the rawness.

Upon hearing the album, Atlantic Records' verdict was that there wasn't a hit on it.

Yeah. So we went away and added *Can't Get Enuff* and *Easy Come Easy Go*. *Can't Get Enuff* is still a cool song, but although *Easy Come Easy Go* was very popular it wasn't representative of what we wanted to be.

Given the time the album came out, I still think it did pretty good. Shortly after we put it out we didn't know that *it* was doomed, though we knew that *we* were.

Are there any songs from it that you now play through gritted teeth?

Little Dirty Blonde is my least favourite song of ours. It might have been cool if it had been recorded by Van Halen. We played it okay but didn't really capture the swing it needed. It's a little too slick.

Kerrang! called you "the blow-dried Bee Gee", and you got some bullying from Metallica. Can you now look back at that and smile?

I can certainly see why it happened. I had a background in ballet and theatre and I was quite flamboyant. I was intentionally trying to put a muso-type band around a David Lee Roth or Paul Stanley-style frontman, and nobody really saw that. However, I got a Grammy recommendation for my classical record [*Conversations With Nijinsky*, 2016], and to me that sets things straight. **DL**

BRICKS ARE HEAVY
L7
Slash, 1992

88

No frills, no fluff, just simple, grunge-laced, metal-wrought rock aggression. Emerging from mid-80s punk roots, LA's L7 refined their brutal craft commercial on their third album, even enjoying a crossover hit with the relative restraint of *Pretend We're Dead*. While rock explored its female side, these grrrls enjoyed a riot of their own. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"Where Nirvana is a pop band at heart, L7 is a rock band, less about pop craft than about sheer aggression."*** Los Angeles Times

WORD GETS AROUND
STEREOPHONICS
V2, 1997

87

Writing the humdrum heroic might have left a metropolitan media in thrall to Mancs and Manics cold, but Kelly Jones's kitchen-sink parochial roar resonated with a blue-collar mainstream more familiar with the chip shop than the Groucho Club. Boasting a soul voice of significant emotive power, Jones delivered a stunningly assured debut empathetic to a lost generation of beer-sodden broken-dreamers. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"A dazzling collection of concise, dramatic snapshots of nineties realism."*** Vox

L7: simple, grunge-laced, metal-wrought rock aggression.

HEARTBREAK STATION
CINDERELLA
Vertigo, 1990

86

While other bands gravitated towards the hair-metal scene, Tom Keifer and co. were going the other way. The third album from the band discovered by Jon Bon Jovi saw them going back to the blues, and with terrific results. Unfortunately it kicked off a long downhill commercial slide, proving that the public don't always know what's good for them. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"Cinderella would dearly love to be revered as bluesmen, and in doing that they dissolve the very essence of their talent."*** Kerrang!

THIRD EYE BLIND
THIRD EYE BLIND
Elektra, 1997

85

The album that gave us *Semi-Charmed Life*, possibly the only song to reference crystal meth dependency and blow jobs in a four-minute sweet pop rock confection. Poppier than most grunge records, *TEB* still has all the lyrical tropes that would define much of the genre and the decade: drug addiction, suicide, depression. It's a visit to the dark side, but with a far sunnier disposition. **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"Balancing a cheery ear for harmonies with a finely honed sense of despair."*** Entertainment Weekly

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
Loosegroove, 1998

84

Out of the ashes of Kyuss, Josh Homme's new project continued the work of his former band, first redefining stoner rock and then putting it firmly on the map. The hypnotic *Regular John* and driving, robotically repetitive *Avon* kick off not only a superb record but also one of the finest three-album runs (completed by *Rated R* and *Songs For The Deaf*) you'll ever hear. **RC**

What they said at the time: ***"They've found a vital place between art-metal seriousness and pop pleasure."*** Rolling Stone

WRECKING BALL
EMMYLOU HARRIS
Elektra, 1995

83

Teamed up with U2/Dylan producer Daniel Lanois for this, her eighteenth album, Harris dialled down the trad-country shapes with which she had made her name, on a selection of smartly chosen covers (Neil Young, Dylan, Hendrix, Gillian Welch), burnishing them instead with the sensual, wide-open mood. Standout track *All My Tears* is like a kiss from a ghost. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"Emmylou Harris would sound good even if she were backed by the Sex Pistols."*** LA Times

MONSTER
R.E.M.
Warner Bros, 1994

82

This was not what anyone expected from R.E.M. following the bleak beauty of their 1992

GETTY

mega-hit *Automatic For The People*. They were always obtuse, but this time the quartet rediscovered their fuzz pedals and wrangled big slabs of glam rock, while lyrically addressing disparate topics of the day – the death of friends, celebrity culture, the rise of reality TV – to electrifying effect. This was R.E.M. raising their voice. And oh how it suited them. **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"A consistently invigorating challenge to 'evolve or die', with all the courage of its convictions."*** *Rolling Stone*

POLYTHENE

FEEDER

Echo, 1997

81

Of all the Britrock foot soldiers who came along in the mid-90s, few dared take on the Americans toe to toe. Feeder were the exception; their glorious debut album sounded like the Smashing Pumpkins or the Pixies overlaid with a gleaming pop nous. Grant Nicholas may have been a modest man, but there was nothing modest about his songwriting; *Stereo World* and the languid *High* wore their ambition on their sleeve. Feeder would mine success as Nicholas's songwriting grew and matured, but they never sounded this thrilling again **DE**

What they said at the time: ***"The album rocks (like a bastard, if truth be told)."*** *NME*

IN IT FOR THE MONEY

SUPERGRASS

Parlophone, 1997

80

While Blur and Oasis were bickering over who was the biggest cheese, three kids from Oxford were quietly outstretching them both. Supergrass's pop-fizzling debut *I Should Coco* had a more instant 'hit' factor, but it was the highly evolved follow-up *In It For The Money* (starring proper bangers such as *Richard III*, the heartbreaking ballad *Late In The Day* and the enigmatic *Hollow Little Reign*) that made Supergrass one of Britpop's most commanding forces. More grown up than its predecessor but still gloriously sunshiney in the likes of *Sun Hits The Sky*, it proved what serious songwriting substance Gaz and co. were made of. **PG**

What they said at the time: ***"It vaults a grown-up Supergrass into the league of ambitious bands like Blur."*** *Rolling Stone*

MEANWHILE IN THE REAL WORLD...

A potted history of the 1990s.

1990

Margaret Thatcher resigns as Prime Minister… Iraq invades Kuwait, sparking off the first Gulf War… US duo Milli Vanilli are forced to hand back their Grammy award after being busted for not singing on their records… The Berlin Wall is demolished… Sinead O'Connor's hankie-tastic *Nothing Compares To U* is the year's biggest single…

1991

British scientist Tim Berners-Lee creates the World Wide Web, which goes live to the world in August, ushering in the internet era… Jane's Addiction singer Perry Farrell launches the Lollapalooza Festival… Freddie Mercury, Def Leppard's Steve Clark and Kiss drummer Eric Carr all pass away…

1992

Los Angeles erupts into rioting after four cops are cleared of beating black motorist Rodney King… Quentin Tarantino's debut film, *Reservoir Dogs*, is released… Rap metal band Body Count fall foul of Hollywood actor Charlton Heston, who objects to their song *Cop Killer*… The first ever text message is sent… Toto drummer Jeff Porcaro dies in a bizarre gardening accident…

Reservoir Dogs

1993

Seventy-six people die when the FBI storm a compound owned by religious cult the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas… *The X-Files* and *Beavis & Butt-head* make their first TV appearances… Steven Spielberg's CGI dinosaur mash-up *Jurassic Park* is the year's biggest film… Mayhem guitarist Euronymous is murdered by fellow Norwegian black metaller Varg 'Count Grisnackh' Vikernes…

1994

Sony launch the Playstation games console… Alan Partridge is unleashed on the world via spoof TV news show *The Day Today*… Aerosmith release the world's first internet-only track, *Head First*… The Channel Tunnel opens between England and France… RIP Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain and American comedian Bill Hicks…

1995

Ninety-five million people watch the OJ Simpson trial verdict on TV… Blind Melon singer Shannon Hoon dies of a cocaine overdose… Genius sitcom *Father Ted* airs for the first time… Blaze Bayley replaces Bruce Dickinson in Iron Maiden… Actor Hugh Grant is arrested after being caught in a car with a prostitute… Head-spinning thrillers *Seven* and *The Usual Suspects* are among the year's biggest films…

OJ Simpson

1996

Alice In Chains play what turns out to be their final gig with original singer Layne Staley… Scientists clone a sheep, given the name Dolly… Ozzy Osbourne headlines the inaugural Ozzfest… The pop chart is a battleground between the Spice Girls' debut single *Wannabe* and unofficial England footie anthem *Three Lions*… A fan is crushed to death at a Smashing Pumpkins gig in Dublin…

1997

Tony Blair becomes Prime Minister, ending 18 years of Tory rule… Black Sabbath's classic line-up reunites… Princess Diana dies in a car crash in Paris… The first episode of *South Park* airs… Members of religious cult Heaven's Gate commit mass suicide in the US, believing they'd be transported aboard an alien spaceship disguised as a comet…

1998

A brand new internet search engine named Google is launched, consigning Ask Jeeves to history… Aerosmith notch up the biggest hit of their career with *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing*… George Michael is busted for 'lewd behaviour' in Los Angeles… Limp Bizkit's record label, Interscope, are accused of payola… Rob Halford admits that he is gay in an interview on VH1… Drum legend Cozy Powell dies…

1999

George Lucas releases *The Phantom Menace*, the first *Star Wars* film in 16 years. *Star Wars* fans everywhere wish he hadn't… Thirteen people are killed in a massacre at Columbine High School… The US spends an estimated $100 billion to prepare for the so-called Y2K computer bug… Woodstock 99, a reboot of the legendary 1969 festival, ends in riots and reports of sexual assaults…

Working-Class Heroes

The sonic polish of Poison and Springsteen might have been ruling FM radio, but in a post-*Nevermind* world **Buffalo Tom**'s mix of Hüsker Dü and Van Morrison would cause ripples.

Words: **Philip Wilding**

79 LET ME COME OVER

BUFFALO TOM

Beggars Banquet, 1992

The late 80s was an odd time to start a band like Buffalo Tom. If it wasn't Springsteen hitting his commercial apex on FM radio, then it was bands such as Poison and Ratt who were filling the airwaves, even in Buffalo Tom's sleepy Boston suburbs. For their part, singer/guitarist Bill Janowitz, bassist Tom Maginnis and drummer Chris Colbourn were at home listening to Hüsker Dü and The Replacements, guitar bands from the alternative rock scene who still had a live sound. The very not-live sound that proliferated was, according to Janowitz, the bane of music in the mid-to-late 80s. "Oh, man," he groans. "I still listen to classic albums from the eighties and I love the material, but can't stand the production. Even something like Springsteen's *Tunnel Of Love*, it's an achievement of great songwriting, but the production really holds it back." He pauses, then says with a laugh: "Is that heresy?"

We're talking as Buffalo Tom are a going concern again following a series of sporadic sabbaticals (they insist they never once broke up), and their new album *Quiet And Peace* is out this month. And while Janowitz is very much a man who lives in the moment, he's happy to reflect on the band's early years that peaked with 1992's irresistible *Let Me Come Over*. It jangled, rocked and broke hearts. It also brought some sorely missed alt.rock pop notes into the mainstream, post-grunge.

"There was a voracious appetite for that kind of thing in England and Europe," says Janowitz. "Take a band like Pixies. I was going to the see them play to fifty people in Massachusetts, their own state, before they went to the UK and became very big there. Same thing for our friends Throwing Muses and Dinosaur Jr, too."

Dinosaur Jr had already played a pivotal part in the Buffalo Tom story, the former's J Mascis having helped produce BT's first two albums. But for *Let Me Come Over*, the band parted ways with Mascis and moved into the picturesque Dreamland Studios, a converted church set among the woods just outside Woodstock.

"It was very beautiful, and so inspiring," says Janowitz, "We did three days there and we loved it, but we didn't have the schedule or budget so we did the rest back at Fort Apache studios in Boston."

Their first two albums had promised much, but *Let Me Come Over* was the sound of a band taking flight. "We were very much swept up in the whole thing," says Janowitz. "I can't believe we got to make three records. I had never really sung before being in Buffalo Tom, so we were all just learning. Having this chance to go out and see Dreamland and Woodstock was a lot of fun."

Let Me Come Over was also the first time the band really flexed their songwriting muscles. Previous albums had been built on the premise that if you had ten songs going into the studio then you had ten songs on the record. Now the process was more about selection and finessing the arrangements, experimenting with keys and harmonics.

"I specifically remember bringing in *Mineral* and running through that with the band in rehearsal and feeling: 'Wow, we've got something different.' This was us letting our influences of a band like Hüsker Dü meld with an artist like Van Morrison. And *Larry* felt like that too. It didn't feel like anything else but a Buffalo Tom song. We hadn't experienced that before.

And while Buffalo Tom were blossoming as songwriters, their producers at Fort Apache, Paul Q Kolderie and Sean Slade, were waiting for technology to catch up to the production vision they shared, utilising automated mixing – something of a rarity.

"We got the rough mixes, and [label] Beggars Banquet liked the material but they wanted it to go to a remix guy. I talked to Ron Saint Germain [Michael Jackson, U2, Living Colour], who was a hotshot mixing guy, on the phone. He was a character. He was like: 'I'll save your little record! I'll come up on my private jet and get it done.' We got his mixes back and we were blown away – mostly in a good way, but some bad. We had him tone down some of the stadium rock, but he was a good sport and did a great job with it."

A critical and commercial success, *Let Me Come Over* landed in a post-*Nevermind* landscape. "That record really did change our world," says Janowitz. "It coincided with [the influence of] people we'd grown up with – college radio, DJ guys we knew who went on to MTV or to promote gigs. The lunatics did take over the asylum, so that bands like us were considered capable of mainstream hits."

But what of the song that would come to typify Buffalo Tom; the anthem for disaffected teens that no Buffalo Tom show would be complete without – the elegiac *Taillights Fade?*

"Later on I felt that it was one of my first really crafted songs," says Janowitz, "but I never thought of it as a stand-out single. It was pretty dark and depressing. It's basically about being resigned, giving up, feeling older than your years, feeling apart and alienated. And being on tour was in, and of, itself a manic experience, and that cultivated that uncertainty.

"I mean, I like the song a lot, it means a lot to me," he continues. "I'm glad to have any song, even if it was just that one, that meant something to somebody, and the fact that it meant a great deal to a lot of people. It's obviously a well-crafted song and I'm proud to do it and I enjoy playing it.

"You asked if it's like our *Free Bird* – something we always have to do," Janowitz says with a laugh. "But you have to remember *Free Bird* is thirteen minutes long, and *Taillights* is just three and a half."

What they said at the time:
"The most riveting performances aren't necessarily the loudest – an indication that these guys can write songs that don't just rely on attitude and energy." Chicago Tribune

Tom cats: Chris Colbourn, Bill Janowitz, Tom Maginnis.

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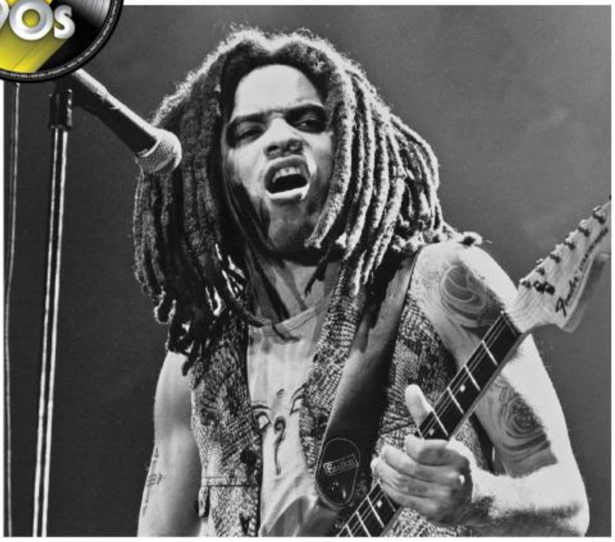
THE REAL 100 GREATEST ALBUMS OF THE 90s

"Later, I felt it was my first really crafted song, but never a standout single."

Bill Janowitz on Taillights Fade



Lenny Kravitz: a musical magpie but with hooks all his own.

SKUNKWORKS

BRUCE DICKINSON

Castle, 1996

78

Cutting his hair and hiring the producer of Nirvana's debut sent out all the right signals when the former Iron Maiden singer made a serious, contemporary alternative-rock-meets-metal album. And it's one that still stands up today. This third solo release was better focused than predecessor *Balls To Picasso*, although with such a well-defined persona Dickinson would always struggle to have his reinvention accepted. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"An amalgam of Rush, Soundgarden and Therapy?, it testifies that Dickinson is more than aware of the late 1990s."*** *Kerrang!*

MECHANICAL ANIMALS

MARILYN MANSON

Nothing, 1998

77

Never had Marilyn Manson's Bowie influence been quite so clearly demonstrated than on this, his third album. A lurch towards the mainstream when the singer's notoriety seemed to be peaking, this Ziggy-inspired, pharmaceuticals-'n'-fame-absorbed, loosely conceptual work toned down the industrial metal to deploy lashings of lascivious bump-'n'-grind dynamism, alongside a dystopian alienation reminiscent of Floyd's *The Wall*. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"An unashamedly crass bid for total world domination."*** *NME*

MAMA SAID

LENNY KRAVITZ

Virgin, 1991

76

The stereotype of the early 90s as angsty and plaid-shirted doesn't square with the peacocking flamboyance of Kravitz's triple-platinum second album. As far as his musical style, he was a magpie, but his hooks were all his own, and when axeman-of-the-moment Slash made a cameo on *Always On The Run* it heightened the sense of an artist whose time was now. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"Kravitz exhumes the styles of his 60s icons with eerie perfection."*** *Entertainment Weekly*

REVENGE

KISS

Mercury, 1992

75

In interviews of the era, Paul Stanley freely admitted that Kiss had "dozed off" during the 1980s with acting careers, solo records and a string of hit-and-miss records. *Revenge* saw them finally wake up, toughen up and reap the rewards with their first US Top 10 album of the decade. "*Revenge* is just a big, fat, erect dick," pronounced Gene Simmons. He wasn't wrong. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"Possibly the heaviest and most uncommercial Kiss album since* Creatures Of The Night*."*** *RAW*

Kiss: *Revenge* gave them their first US Top 10 album of the decade.

YOURSELF OR SOMEONE LIKE YOU

MATCHBOX 20

Atlantic, 1996

74

They were lumped in with fellow radio rockers like Third Eye Blind and Semisonic, but Matchbox 20 were their own men. This, their debut album, proved that singer Rob Thomas was a prodigiously gifted songwriter – something supported by its 15 million sales and six hit singles. **RC**

What they said at the time: ***"An absolute master class in bridging the gap between rock and pop."*** *Houston Press*

KISS: NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM; LENNY KRAVITZ: GETTY

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With *Grave Dancers Union* Soul Asylum became bona fide rock stars.

Q&A

DAVE PIRNER *from* SOUL ASYLUM

Soul Asylum released five commercially unsuccessful albums before Grave Dancer's Union. Were you getting desperate?
I would say yes. The band was flailing. We made these very acoustic-sounding demos and took them to six different labels in New York. It was definitely a bit of a Hail Mary: "We don't want to fuck this up this time." I heard the demos again a while ago. I was astonished at how good they sounded for a bunch of guys who had never played anything but real fucking loud punk rock.

Runaway Train was the album's breakthrough song. Were you trying to write a hit single?
No, I really didn't have a fucking clue what people were expecting or what a hit was. I noticed people reacting to the song for the first time and I went: "Oh shit, people like this song better than the other songs. How about that?"

The video featured images of missing kids. How much was that part of its success?
The director, Tony Kaye, looked at the word 'Runaway' and ran with that. Tony was totally eccentric and really fun to work with, and he was just riffing on a word. To me it's a song about overcoming depression. It's not really anything other than a raw emotion. But people still make this connection to the video to this day.

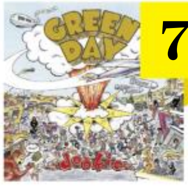
The album went triple-platinum. Were you comfortable with that level of success?
No. I can understand that maybe some people would revel in that, but it terrified me at times. There were a couple of moments where I got mobbed, and it's, like, what the fuck? The celebrity thing is just a lot of bullshit. You take that too seriously and you're in big trouble.

You played at Bill Clinton's presidential inauguration in 1993 (MTV called him 'The Rock'n'Roll President'). What was that like?
We played three or four events for him in total. I did not see that one coming at all: "He wants us to play on the White House lawn? You're fucking kidding me." Clinton was very charming. I asked him to sit in on the saxophone. He said: "You guys play the music, I'm going to play the President."

How do you view Grave Dancer's Union now? Is it Soul Asylum's best album?
I don't know about that, but it was the right move at the right time. **DE**

DOOKIE

GREEN DAY
Reprise, 1994



73

The moment punk finally broke America came courtesy of three gonk-headed gurners who appeared to happen upon the ultimate crossover pop-core masterpiece in similar style to infinite number of monkeys clacking out *Macbeth*. Billions of similar Californian combos had been threatening to make *Dookie* for years, but Green Day – it seems – were secretly geniuses. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"Being dumb has never been so much fun."*** NME

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE
Epic, 1992

72

Mixing rock riffs with hip-hop beats and rap vocals was not that new an idea by 1992, but this LA quartet gave the formula a truly thrilling overhaul on their debut album. Tom Morello's startlingly inventive guitar sounds and some politically uncompromising lyrics added a fierce edge, and in *Killing In The Name* they had a rebel anthem for a generation that had shaken off the old tribal ties. **JS**

What they said at the time: ***"There's a total lack of pretension or contrivance. The results burn with an undeniable conviction."*** NME

VIGIL IN A WILDERNESS OF MIRRORS

FISH
EMI, 1990

71

Fish's debut solo venture after his split with Marillion saw him get off to a proverbial flyer. Punchy, catchy songs such as *Big Wedge* and *State Of Mind* sat alongside darker brooding fare such as *Vigil* and *Cliché* as he exorcised old demons of his recent past. **JE**

What they said at the time: ***"When the balance is struck between words and music the result is powerful and compelling."*** Kerrang!

LAST DECADE DEAD CENTURY

WARRIOR SOUL
Geffen, 1990

70

Kory Clarke's timing was awful. The erstwhile drummer-turned-railing-frontman relocated to New York from his native Detroit at the end of the 80s to form Warrior Soul. It was a time when hair-metal still reigned and the alt.rock revolution hadn't yet happened, and *Last Decade Dead Century* – which sounded like Joy Division, Killing Joke and the Stooges having a fight – came and went in the blink of an eye. But still it remains an incendiary masterpiece. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"One of the most important bands rock has seen."*** Kerrang!

IT'S A SHAME ABOUT RAY

LEMONHEADS
Atlantic, 1992

69

With the Lemonheads' fifth album, frontman Evan Dando transcended his band's lo-fi roots by upping his songwriting game, giving it a shinier pop sheen while losing none of his disaffected attitude. A dozen brilliant songs clocking in at under 30 minutes cover all the 90s' buzz topics: apathy, drugs, unrequited love, all coolly delivered by one of the slacker generation's patron saints. **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"Combines the sound of yesterday's R.E.M.-spawned 'alternative' scene with today's post-Seattle griminess."*** Chicago Tribune

GETTY x2

TUESDAY NIGHT MUSIC CLUB

SHERYL CROW

A&M, 1993

68

After recording then ditching the big-budget debut album she made for a major label, Sheryl Crow found salvation with an LA outsider boys' club that included geniuses David Baerwald and Kevin Gilbert. They met on Tuesdays in a funky home studio. They jammed. They wrote songs. The album they released, *Tuesday Night Music Club*, not only made Crow a star but also came to define a new, home-grown approach that was a game-changer for the recording business. **BDM**

What they said at the time: ***"Tales of struggle, devotion, heartbreak frosted with a thick layer of affecting knowledge and rough-edged smarts."*** Variety

HARVEST MOON

NEIL YOUNG

Reprise, 1992

67

Working with many of the same musicians who were involved with his classic 1972 album *Harvest*, with the belated sequel Young crafted a series of emotional, bountiful songs which captured his ability to tap into contemporary music, while also retaining individuality. By this time Young was also finding favour with a new generation; *Harvest Moon* appealed to many of the fans and bands involved in the burgeoning grunge scene. **MD**

What they said at the time: ***"Beneath its placid surface are the craggy scars of middle age."*** Rolling Stone

GETTY

GRAVE DANCERS UNION

SOUL ASYLUM

A&M, 1992

66

With *Grave Dancers Union*, Soul Asylum went from plucky, rag-store punk troubadours to the pride of the alt.nation, a move that nobody saw coming. Anchored by the sublime *Runaway Train*, the album is so Gen X it hurts – plaintive, wounded and ragged, but with a bleary-eyed optimism that shone through the murk. No longer junior league Replacements, with *Grave Dancers Union* Soul Asylum became bona fide rock stars. **KM**

What they said at the time: ***"While hard-core fans scream that the band has sold out, a slew of kids buying the album are talking about the brand-new group they've just discovered."*** Rolling Stone

MAGIC AND LOSS

LOU REED

Sire, 1992

65

Not that he'd admit it, but Lou Reed was no stranger to artistic doldrums. His mid-80s indicated a terminal decline, before the death of Andy Warhol spurred a trio of classic albums: *New York*, *Songs For Drella* and this. Raw from the recent loss of confidant Doc Pomus, here Reed is uncompromising, unguarded, bereaved, aggrieved, awed and open. An essential, unflinching testimony. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"A record which dares to look straight into the face of the unknown and the unthinkable."*** NME

1977

ASH

Infectious, 1996

64

Such was Tim Wheeler's ear for a genius hook that the Downpatrick trio's full-length debut gave every indication of being a 'greatest hits' package. Boasting five charting singles (two of which went Top 10), *1977* married the naive concision of vintage pop with a post-grunge alt.rock muscularity that, when delivered by genuine fresh-faced teens, fit its time perfectly. Oh yeah. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"What invariably saves them from mature-rock-band hell are those simple, honest, priceless standbys – top-hole tunes."*** NME

Robert Plant: nodding to his 70s roots yet not tied to nostalgia.

RATM (above left): startlingly inventive guitar sounds and some politically uncompromising lyrics.

MANIC NIRVANA

ROBERT PLANT

Es Paranza, 1990

63

The former Led Zeppelin singer has never stagnated as a solo artist. So it came as no surprise that he entered the new decade not living through past glories, but instead striding out with a hungry, lean and energetic approach. Here he nodded to his 70s roots yet wasn't tied to nostalgia. **MD**

What they said at the time: ***"It has the savvy and emotional strength you'd expect from an adult."*** Entertainment Weekly

PRISONERS IN PARADISE

EUROPE

Epic, 1991

62

Although the band stretched out a little, indulging Queen fantasies with its title track, Europe's last album before an 11-year hiatus was very much a product of its era. With the Seattle witch hunt imminent, Beau Hill's production made them sound just like every other big-haired band. And yet, 27 years down the line, *Prisoners In Paradise* still scrubs up very well. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"The Beau Hill influence is too strong, stifling the band's undoubted charisma and allowing it to shine only briefly."*** RAW

The Man Who Would Be King

Just a few years earlier, **Porcupine Tree**'s Steven Wilson was buried deep in the prog ghetto. But with the band's fifth album his inner pop star broke out.

Words: **Jerry Ewing**

It's quite interesting to cast one's mind back to 1999 when Porcupine Tree released *Stupid Dream* and to draw comparisons to the furore that surrounded the release of Steven Wilson's most recent album, *To The Bone*, last year. When early reports filtered out onto the web that with *To The Bone* Wilson was making a sonic shift, all manner of toys were hurled out of the prams of the prog diehards and Wilson devotees, and the tumult hasn't stopped since. "It's a pop record" was the oft-heard cry from detractors as Wilson pointed his compass in the direction of the 80s. Not the brash, garish, shoulder-padded 80s pop of Duran Duran or Frankie Goes To Hollywood, but the more progressively minded intelligent rock and pop that had emanated from artists such as Peter Gabriel, Kate Bush, Talk Talk and Tears For Fears. These are all artists who currently find much favour with the progressive community, but that didn't stop barbs being sent in Wilson's direction. And it continues to this day.

For all the assumed musical superiority over other genres, prog fans, like most rock fans, are afraid of change. It's strange for a genre called 'progressive', that supposedly prides itself on pushing boundaries as it constantly evolves, that the default setting for anything new or slightly different is 'panic'. Equally, Wilson's ubiquity is often cited by those who wish to diminish his achievements, yet this is another very common trait for a musician in the progressive world. The very fact that *To The Bone* reached No.3 in the UK album chart on the week of its release (it had even duelled briefly with Ed Sheeran and Elvis Presley for the coveted top spot) was looked upon sniffily by some of the prognoscenti. Almost "How dare this new prog man-child be so successful when my beloved Fruupp battled so gamely in the early 70s for nothing?" One imagines Wilson feeling he's damned if he does, damned if he doesn't. Although the huge success he's attained since he dreamed up the idea of Porcupine Tree in 1987 probably makes things bearable for him.

"I don't think I ever said I didn't want to be popular or successful," Wilson muses. "Obviously I'm best known for making music in an area where there hasn't been a huge amount of commercial success in recent years. But I'm just like every other musician you'd meet: I have an ego, I want to be accepted and liked, and I want my music to be as popular and successful as can be. Who wouldn't want that?"

When Porcupine Tree released *Stupid Dream* in 1999, Wilson was nowhere near as successful or well known, or as ubiquitous, as he is today. In fact only his post-rock group No-Man, which he formed with Tim Bowness back in 1987, presented any kind of

61 STUPID DREAM
PORCUPINE TREE
Kscope, 1999

What they said at the time: ***"Their most accomplished and advanced work to date."*** Classic Rock

Porcupine Tree: (l-r) Richard Barbieri, Chris Maitland, Steven Wilson, Colin Edwin.

challenge to the Porcupine Tree mothership. And yet *Stupid Dream*, the fifth studio album from Porcupine Tree, marked a distinct shift in sound and approach. Perhaps even more so than Wilson's *To The Bone* did after its predecessor *Hand.Cannot.Erase.*

"The sound of the band before we made *Stupid Dream* was quite different to how we sounded when we started," Wilson points out. "The early stuff is really quite psychedelic in a way. If you listen to something like *Voyage 34*, it might be a lengthy piece of music but it's got ambient and dance influences in there. It was only after *Up The Downstair* (1993) that things sort of shifted in a more progressive direction."

Porcupine Tree had actually begun as a band name Wilson dreamed up for the booklet for his first demo tape, *Tarquin's Seaweed Farm*, but by the time the band's first official album, *On The Sunday Of Life*, was released in 1992 the name had stuck. *Up The Downstair* saw the first appearances from former Japan keyboard player Richard Barbieri and bassist Colin Edwin, and drummer Chris Maitland featured on 1995's *The Sky Moves Sideways*. When Porcupine Tree entered the studio to record 1996's *Signify*, it was the first time Wilson had a proper band around him, and it was one that would remain intact until Gavin Harrison replaced Maitland in 2002, the band's sole line-up change.

"It certainly helped give us more of a sense of band identity," Wilson says today. "Up until then it had really been me, with musicians coming in to help out as and when I needed them. The band were in place for the tour for *The Sky Moves Sideways*, but *Signify* was the first band album in that sense. So by the time we got to *Stupid Dream*, things were reasonably settled."

Released in March 1999, *Stupid Dream* was the first Porcupine Tree album to shift away from the long-form musical pieces that made up the bulk of previous recordings and concentrate on a shorter, more focused style. In much the same way that *Hand. Cannot.Erase.* pointed to the direction that *To The Bone* would take, so *Signify* edged Porcupine Tree in the direction of *Stupid Dream*. True, the sound of *Signify* is still of a swirling, Floydian soundscape, but the song lengths were getting shorter. Where *The Sky Moves Sideways* was largely built around the epic two-part title track and the equally lengthy *Moonloop* (itself an edited version of an earlier 40-minute band improvisation), on its follow-up the song lengths were definitely more concise.

By the end of the decade, progressive music had largely woken from it lengthy 90s malaise. American prog metal pioneers Dream Theater had helped point the way, and although things were still some way off from the resurgence of a decade later, Porcupine ▷

"*Stupid Dream* was definitely a pivotal album, both for me and the band."

Steven Wilson

Set the controls for the heart of Steven Wilson.

Tree were frequently being hailed as both movers and saviours for the genre in the UK music press. But that was something that did not always sit well with the band's main protagonist.

"We were often being called the 'Pink Floyd of the nineties'. And while there was a bit of truth to that, to me there's always been more in my music," Wilson explains.

This writer remembers that the Wilson of the time could get quite animated in interviews, rejecting the 'prog rock' tag.

"I'm not going to deny that progressive music isn't part of my make up," he sighs. "Everyone knows that *Dark Side Of The Moon* was a very early influence on me. But then so was Donna Summer. And I've always seen my music as both reflecting all my influences, which are many and varied, and always moving forward. It would be difficult to say that any two of my records sound the same."

While *Stupid Dream* isn't a drastic sonic departure from what Porcupine Tree had released before it – it has strong echoes of the band's more modern take on progressive rock, for example – only opening track *Even Less* (at just over seven minutes) and *Don't Hate Me* (eight and a half) represent the kind of thing that prog fans, who will often look to a song's length rather than what's contained therein, revel in. The bulk of the material comes in at the three-to-four-minute mark. And although Wilson was no stranger to shorter material, *Stupid Dream* represented his songwriting at his most concentrated.

> *"Everyone knows Dark Side Of The Moon was a very early influence on me. But then so was Donna Summer."*
>
> *Steven Wilson*

"I was much more interested in songcraft at that point," he says. "There'd been plenty of long-form composition in what we'd done previously. But at the time of writing *Stupid Dream* I was listening to things like Todd Rundgren, Brian Wilson's stuff with the Beach Boys, Jeff Buckley, Crosby, Stills, Nash And Young. Just exploring a different part of my creativity. But I don't see a drastic shift in the actual sound of the band on *Stupid Dream*."

One thing that had changed was the band's record label. Delerium, run by the band's manager until 2004, Richard Allen, had released all the Porcupine Tree albums to that point. For *Stupid Dream* the band signed to Snapper, who released the album on their modern prog Kscope imprint (the same label as Wilson's solo albums prior to *To The Bone*).

"Richard was great and Delerium had done really well for us," says Wilson. "But I think there was a feeling, from them as well, that we needed to take another step up, and they weren't equipped for that."

Although the band signed to a bigger label, the subject matter for *Stupid Dream* almost flies in the face of such a move, being Wilson's take on the music industry at that point: that the aspirations of young musicians in their quest for fame and fortune are nothing but a 'stupid dream', given the eternal struggle to achieve such a goal. Which of course has become even more difficult in the years since.

"I think a lot of teenage kids have this dream of being pop stars, of being a professional musician," is how Wilson framed it at the time. "This stupid dream of being famous and 'life is a ball and everything is wonderful'. And, of course, actually the reality is that being a professional musician is a very hard work. It can be very heartbreaking, there's a lot of disappointment, there's a lot of hard work, there's a lot of travelling."

This was reflected in the album cover art, depicting an overly shiny CD pressing plant, workers clad in protective boiler suits, like scientists in some contagious disease lab.

"I remember sitting down with the record company to discuss how we're gonna market this album," he says, smiling at the recollection. "And at that point your record becomes a product. I just had this image of these CDs just coming off this conveyor belt. And obviously it's at complete odds with the music."

While most reviewers were effusive in their praise of *Stupid Dream*, some drawing comparisons to Radiohead's *OK Computer* from two years earlier ("Of course I'd heard it," Wilson says), one wrote: "People who love The Tree for their long, experimental and instrumental compositions might be put off by this new album."

"I don't recall any real backlash," he muses. "Or if there was one it didn't really affect us in any way."

What *Stupid Dream* did do was place Porcupine Tree, and by proxy progressive music, in a modern context, from which both have thrived. Wilson would lead Porcupine Tree into a heavier realm after the band signed with US label Lava and later Roadrunner Records, with albums such as *Deadwing* (2005) and *Fear Of A Blank Planet* (2007), before placing the band on indefinite hiatus in 2010.

"Working with Mikael Åkerfeldt and Opeth a few years later opened me up to the heavier style of music that Porcupine Tree began to make later," he admits,"But this, and *Lightbulb Sun* [2000] were definitely another shift in what we did."

Interestingly, even Wilson became more comfortable with the 'prog' tag as the genre began to evolve with a much clearer and modern approach, away from the old 70s archetypes, and bands such as the aforementioned Opeth, Anathema, the Pineapple Thief and legions more across the globe took up the challenge of continuing its legacy. And now, with his solo career in full swing, Wilson continues to lead the charge.

"*Stupid Dream* was definitely a pivotal album, both for me and the band. It was a step on in musical terms, continually adapting our sound, and it was step up in business terms, because we really started to get noticed. The next album charted for us, our first, and from then on, every album I've ever released, either in Porcupine Tree or solo, has charted higher and sold more than the one before, something I'm very proud of."

PHOTOSHOT

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LEGACY

Quireboys: a breath of fresh air with their pretention-free rock'n'roll.

COPPER BLUE

SUGAR
Creation, 1992

60

Emerging from the emotional wreckage of Hüsker Dü and the desolate, stuttering start he had made to a solo career, Bob Mould found solace in a new power trio and hope-kissed melody. Euphoric but still urgent and bittersweet, *Copper Blue* was Mould's pop album, albeit with his hurricane-force guitar dialled up to 11 even on such bliss-outs as *Changes* and *If I Can't Change Your Mind*. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"The last word in love songs and the full stop after heartbreak."*** NME

HOLLYWOOD TOWN HALL

THE JAYHAWKS
American, 1992

59

Country rock was undergoing a quiet renaissance at the beginning of the 90s, and The Jayhawks were at the forefront. *Hollywood Town Hall*, the Minneapolis band's third album, mined a seam of bohemian rootsiness that stretched back to Gram Parsons, relocating it from the coke-dusted environs of Laurel Canyon in the Hollywood Hills to the open skies and cracked fields of the Midwest. A decade later it would be called Americana. Back then, it was just gloriously timeless music. **DE**

What they said at the time: ***"There's nothing nostalgic in the band's effortless mix of sawdust harmonies and craggy electric guitars."*** Entertainment Weekly

SIAMESE DREAM

SMASHING PUMPKINS
Virgin, 1993

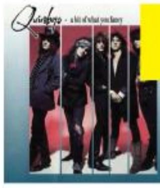
58

Although grunge was characterised as rejecting many of hard rock's traditional excesses, Smashing Pumpkins mainman Billy Corgan was a born rocker, and *Siamese Dream*, his band's second and breakthrough album, showed how alt.rock and metal could produce powerful offspring. At the same time, Corgan's trademark vocal flicker between cooing vulnerability and yowling angst had the scratchiness of purest indie to offset booming riffs and manically metallic guitar soloing, and it rarely worked better than on this second album. **JS**

What they said at the time: ***"One of the most grand-scale, expansively passionate blasts of music you'll hear this year."*** Select

A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY

QUIREBOYS
Parlophone, 1990



57

In a decade obsessed with hi-tech production sounds, the pretension-free rock'n'roll of the Quireboys was a breath of fresh air. Fronted by the gravel-voiced Spike, the band kept things simple and rootsy, channelling the Stones and the Faces. Sure, at times the similarities were a little obvious, but there's a reason that songs such as *Seven O'Clock, Hey You, There She Goes Again* and the bleeding-hearted ballad *I Don't Love You Anymore* remain crowd-pleasers almost three decades on. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"Imagine the contents of your favourite pub jukebox poured out onto a single slither o' wax."*** RAW

EMPIRE

QUEENSRŸCHE
EMI-USA, 1990

56

How did the band follow the acclaimed *Operation: Mindcrime*? By not trying to compete with its predecessor. *Empire* is an intelligent, sophisticated hard rock album, and the obvious virtuosity is used to enhance the melodic appeal of songs like *Silent Lucidity* and *Jet City Woman*. **MD**

What they said at the time: ***"Queensrÿche is single-handedly keeping the art rock wing of heavy metal alive."*** Entertainment Weekly

VERSION 2.0

GARBAGE
Mushroom, 1998

55

As the title implied, Garbage's second album wasn't so much a reinvention as an upgrade of their striking self-titled debut of 1995. Butch Vig, Duke Erikson and Steve Marker stirred the same backdrop of bubbling electronics and guitar punctuations, Shirley Manson channelled Debbie Harry and Chrissie Hynde over the top, but the whole was slinkier, sassier and more refined. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"Barely a verse goes by without a hook or two snagging the listener's ear."*** Baltimore Sun

THE QUIREBOYS: NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM.

MÖTLEY CRÜE

MÖTLEY CRÜE
Elektra, 1994

54

What do you do after you've made the most successful album of your career? If you're Mötley Crüe, you ditch your singer and your sound. The distinct lack of Spandex irked long-time Crüe fans, but *Hooligan's Holiday*'s grungey grime and the fantastically bleak *Uncle Jack* suggested that this John Corabi-led Crüe deserved more of a chance than it got. **RC**

What they said at the time: ***"The new and improved Crüe has come through with aggressive, chunky rock songs."*** *Los Angeles Times*

ROLL THE BONES

RUSH
Atlantic, 1991

53

Everybody knew that Rush could piss the lengthy and complex. *Roll The Bones* showed that there was a flip-side to these masters of the sprawling epic and that they had a place in the modern musical landscape. Less progtastic, more in tune with the times, particularly impressive is the strength of the more direct songwriting and the balls to explore beyond their comfort zone. **PH**

What they said at the time: ***"Along with the usual melodic nods toward MTV metal and 19th-century concert halls, now there are rhythmic nods toward Nintendo games and West Africa."*** *Entertainment Weekly*

APPLE

MOTHER LOVE BONE
Polydor, 1990

52

If 1990 saw the passing of the torch from LA glam to Seattle grunge, then *Apple* was the perfect transition. Frontman Andy Wood should have been a star, and had the looks, lungs and canny way with a chorus of many of his glam forebears, while the corruscating musical foundation was laid by future Pearl Jam axis Stone Gossard and Jeff Ament. Alas *Apple* would be all we'd get, as heroin stopped this star-in-the-making before he even got started. **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"Apple may be one of the first great hard-rock records of the 90s."*** *New York Times*

Loudmouth at the Double Door in Chicago, April 1999.

LOUDMOUTH: GETTY

ALMOST FAMOUS

Five brilliant 90s bands who shoulda been huge. But weren't.

LOUDMOUTH

Part of a brief, ill-fated late-90s biker-metal resurgence that also included less-than-hopefuls American Pearl, Chicago's Loudmouth were very briefly rock's great new hopes, a sort of Guns N' Roses for the alt.rock crowd. They released one stellar, self-titled album on Hollywood Records in 1999, then rode off into the sunset.

NEW AMERICAN SHAME

Auburn, Washington's New American Shame's stunning self-titled debut (Atlantic Records, 1999), was the last great record of the 1990s, a crunchy, balls-to-the-wall riff-rocker that sounded more like AC/DC than AC/DC did in the 90s. Unfortunately everybody bought Korn records instead, and NAS soon imploded.

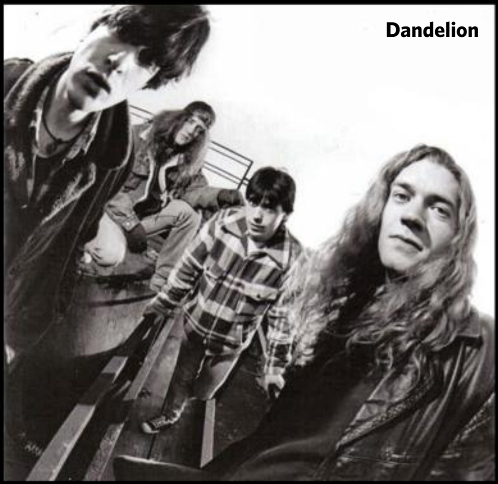
Asphalt Ballet

ASPHALT BALLET

One of the first hair-metal-era rock bands to openly move towards darker sounds, San Diego's Asphalt Ballet may have been the world's first glam-grunge band. Their two early-90s albums on Virgin Records managed an impressive balancing act between hooky, pyrotechnic glam-metal and dark, bluesy hard rock. Nirvana still killed them, though.

SUGARTOOTH

Sugartooth flirted with the big time – a debut album on Geffen Records, a song in the Howard Stern film *Private Parts* (backing the shock jock himself) and an animated thumbs-up from 90s tastemakers Beavis & Butt-head – but somehow their deliciously poppy, supremely bummed-out grunge rock failed to light any fires.



Dandelion

DANDELION

It's a mystery why Dandelion never really hit with the kids. They were cool, had great songs, major-label backing, videos on MTV (including the shabby classic *Weird Out*) and songs on TV shows and in films. The Philadelphia grungers released *I Think I'm Gonna Be Sick* in 1993 and *Dyslexicon* in 1995 – two albums' worth of smart, hooky, swirling neo-psych slacker rock – before fading out in the mid-90s. **KM**

Live And Kicking

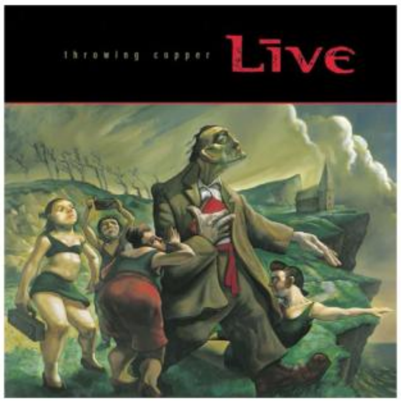
A small-town teenage band from Pennsylvania with a foundation of The Cure, R.E.M. and spiritual philosophy. It was a moment when **Live**'s heartfelt anthems could become a beacon.

Words: **Dave Everley**

51 THROWING COPPER

LIVE

Radioactive, 1994



Ed Kowalczyk was stuck in traffic when the scale of his success hit him. It was July 1995, and Live's singer was trying to get to a gig at the Hersheypark Stadium in Hershey Park, South Pennsylvania, only to be thwarted by 30,000 other people trying to get to the gig. The snag was that it was Kowalczyk's own band who were due on stage that day, and this homecoming show was supposed to be their crowning glory.

"There was this moment where we were sitting on top of this hill, and I could see about two or three miles ahead of me across the valley, and we were literally stuck behind all the fans trying to get to the show," he says. "That's when it sunk in. I thought: 'This is crazy. Look at all these people. I can't get to my own concert.'" He laughs. "I was in the traffic thinking, 'Was someone supposed to send an escort or something?'"

Kowalczyk and Live eventually made the stage, albeit late. But they were used to long delays. Their second album, the electrifying *Throwing Copper*, had reached No.1 in April 1995, a year after its release.

Amid the seismic musical and cultural upheavals of the early 90s, *Throwing Copper* was a kind of beacon. It rode the alt. rock wave, but rejected the drug-fuelled nihilism and weaponised irony of grunge in favour of deeply rooted spirituality and relentless self-questioning that owed more to U2 and R.E.M. than it did to Nirvana or Soundgarden. In Kowalczyk they had a singer who wore his early-90s earnestness as a badge of honour.

"We took our own road," he says now. "We were this band from a small town in Pennsylvania with big guitars that pushed into this universal, spiritual place that wasn't necessarily safe ground for a rock'n'roll band. That took courage."

Live's own career wasn't quite stuck in a traffic jam, but it took a long time to arrive at its destination. The journey started in the "cultural vacuum" (Kowalczyk's words) of York, Pennsylvania back in the early 80s, when the singer, guitarist Chad Taylor, bassist Pat Dahlheimer and drummer Chad Gracey put together their first band, Action Front. Dahlheimer's older brother was their musical compass, introducing them to the world of alternative rock years before it merged with the mainstream.

"He said: 'If you want to form a band, these are the groups you should be listening to: The Cure, R.E.M., U2, The Smiths,'" says Kowalczyk. "We just buried our noses into those bands. Those were the days before they were household names."

The precocious quartet had barely entered their teens when they recorded their first demo tape, featuring covers of songs by the first three of those four bands. It would be several years and countless name changes (discarded monikers: Body Odor Boys, Paisley Brues, Club Fungus) before they settled on Live and released their debut, 1991's *Mental Jewelry*.

The long slog that had got them to that point paid off. *Mental Jewelry* was the work of a band who were already fully formed. On songs such as *Pain Lies On The Riverside* and *Operation Spirit (The Tyranny Of Tradition)*, Live came on like a patchouli-doused R.E.M. As the titles suggests, Kowalczyk's lyrics came from a thoughtful place – the singer was a student of the works of Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti, who espoused the notion of personal humility and selflessness.

"It was just a straightforward questioning of everything – the traditions you grew up in, automatic things that you just take for granted," he says. "There were a lot of light-bulb moments, one after the other."

Live's against-the-grain approach was striking enough to get them traction on college radio and MTV. "It was more successful than we ever thought it would be," says Kowalczyk. But by the time it came to record a follow-up album, they were restless for change.

"I remember coming home from that tour and thinking, 'Okay, so what now?'" he says. "One thing was that we wanted to make things more dynamic. We were really into that chinky-chinky rhythmic guitar thing, but I was thinking about how we could sell things even more emotionally. And you need big guitars for that. So we plugged in."

In July 1993 the band holed up in Pachyderm Studios in rural Minnesota to write and record their second album. The studio had a fine pedigree: Soul Asylum, The Jayhawks and, most notably, Nirvana had recorded key albums there. More importantly, it was tucked away in the woods, far from any potential distractions – useful for Live, whose ambition wasn't matched by their budget.

"Our record company was pretty stingy, and I think we could afford maybe two weeks," Kowalczyk says with a laugh. "Which in hindsight was probably good. It was throw-and-go, make it as good as you can in the little time you have, without the luxury of all the technology we have now."

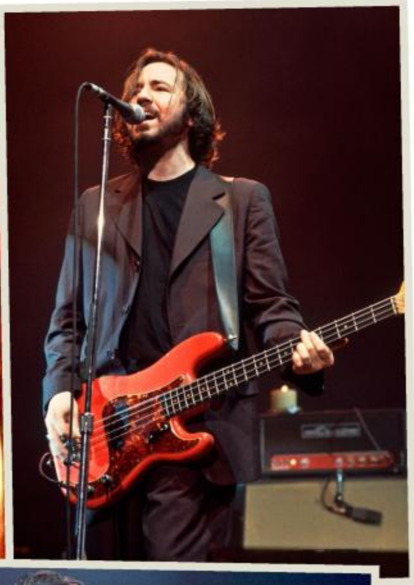
Overseeing the sessions was producer Jerry Harrison, formerly guitarist with New York art-punk visionaries Talking Heads. Harrison passed on to Live his own experience of being in a group who habitually broke the rules.

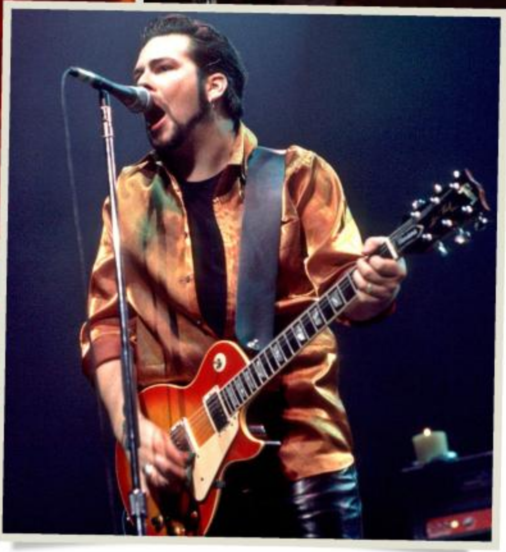
"We didn't know how to make records. We didn't know the songs could be six-and-a-half minutes long," says Kowalczyk. "Jerry was a real mentor in that sense. And he was a real intellectual guy. Me and him would have these really deep conversations ▷

What they said at the time: ***"It's not that they're calculating imitators. Rather, Live capture the anger and ache of the moment in riveting songs driven home by expert players."*** *Rolling Stone*

Live in Chicago, 1994: (l-r) Chad Taylor, Chad Gracey, Ed Kowalczyck, Patrick Dahlheimer.

"I thought: 'This is crazy. Look at all these people. I can't get to my own concert.'"
Ed Kowalczyk
GETTY





about spirituality and philosophy. He was really into the lyrics I was writing. He really inspired me in a lot of ways."

The band worked fast, building songs from the ground up. Their steely new musical MO was evident in new songs such as *I Alone*, *Selling The Drama* and *Lightning Crashes* – songs that chimed with the prevailing trends of grunge and alternative rock but possessed an oblique philosophical depth most of their early 90s peers steered clear of. Now, as then, Kowalczyk prefers his lyrics to remain open to interpretation, though lines such as '*And to Christ, a cross, and to me, a chair/I will sit and earn the ransom from up here*' (from *Selling The Drama*) were a world away from *Are You Going To Go My Way?*.

"Those ideas came to me really easy," says Kowalczyk. "You're a fledgling songwriter and lyricist, and you're not sure if you're very good at it, and then out comes this energy that's encapsulated in those songs."

April 1994 was barely under way when Kurt Cobain committed suicide. *Throwing Copper* was released just two weeks after Cobain's death. Its spiritual intensity and existential questioning seemed to simultaneously reflect and salve the mix of grief and confusion that followed. Even the striking cover – a painting by Scottish artist Peter Howson of a figure clutching a bible on the edge of a cliff – only added to the mystique.

"That was an emotional period of time for music," says Kowalczyk. "And as a writer, it was an emotional time to be participating in it in your own way."

Throwing Copper sold steadily, building a head of steam rather than blazing out of the traps. The singles *Selling The Drama* and *I Alone* were picked up by MTV. At some point between the two Kowalczyk shaved his head, leaving just a rat's tail of hair; in the *I Alone* video he looked more like a devotee of some obscure Eastern religion than a rock singer. His performance screamed: 'I am seriously intense'.

> "Would I ever get a five-and-a-half-minute song on the radio in America today?' I doubt it."
>
> Ed Kowalczyk

"Oh, we were very serious young men," he says now, laughing. "Maybe not too serious. But close."

That September, Live were invited to play Woodstock '94, a 25th-anniversary update of the famed hippie-era festival. Today the line-up looks like a time capsule of the Clinton era: Blind Melon, Nine Inch Nails, Green Day, Candlebox and Collective Soul. Still, it put Live in front of 250,000 pairs of eyes on the day – and tens of millions more on TV.

"The way I experienced it was such a blur," says Kowalczyk. "We rode up there, they spun the stage around and we're standing in front of a quarter of a million people. It was overwhelming; we kicked into a kind of adrenalin survival mode. We rocked out the set, spun back around, we were off. That fast. It was crazy."

Woodstock dovetailed with the song that would give *Throwing Copper* the extra push it needed. Released at the end of September 1994, *Lightning Crashes* was Live boiled down to their essence: an alt.rock power ballad that attempted to square the circle of life from birth to death, complete with vivid images of childbirth ('*the placenta falls to the floor*') and a memorably arty video. At five and a half minutes – the first two of which were completely free of drums – it was one of the more unlikely hits of the decade.

"I went into it with this idea that I just wanted to tell a story," says Kowalczyk. "I wasn't sure what the story was going to be, but it started with: 'Well, why not just begin with a birth?' It became this celebratory song about life in a really deep way, without being cheesy. You look back and go: 'Would I ever get a five-and-a-half minute song on the radio in America today?' I doubt it."

The place that *Lightning Crashes* occupies in the cultural landscape of 90s America was sealed in the bitterest way imaginable. On April 19, 1995, white supremacist Timothy McVeigh detonated a car bomb outside a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people – at the time the biggest terrorist atrocity on US soil since Pearl Harbor.

In the days that followed, an Oklahoma radio station began to air a version of *Lightning Crashes* that mixed the original song with samples from news reports that emerged after the tragedy.

"It kind of became the adopted song for the bombing," says Kowalczyk. "People used it to mourn to. It soundtracked a part of history."

The song's raised profile in the wake of the Oklahoma bombing helped propel *Throwing Copper* to No.1 on the *Billboard* chart in early May 1995, a year to the week after the album was released.

As Live's profile grew, so did the scrutiny the band found themselves under. "On stage, this intently mediocre young band is U2 without a guitar sound," wrote venerated American music journalist Robert Christgau sneeringly. "On record, it's R.E.M. without songs." Much of the criticism centred on Kowalczyk's undiluted intensity.

Above: Live (with a newly shaven Kowalczyk) at the Riviera Theatre in Chicago, October 3, 1994.

GETTY x3

"I definitely had moments where people weren't so nice," he says. "But in the end, the balance was always to the good. People would say: 'We want to hear what you're going to do next.'"

What happened next was a textbook 90s move: a band reacting against its success. Live followed *Throwing Copper* with 1996's *Secret Samadhi*, a darker, murkier proposition. Kowalczyk's lyrics became more oblique: *'Let's go hang out in a mall or a morgue/A smorgasbord'*, ran the opening line of the album's first track, *Rattlesnake*.

"I always admired the way R.E.M. never duplicated what they did before – there was always this sense of, 'If you just recreate what you did, it's cheesy and stupid'," he says. "There was a bit of that – a rebellion against our success: what would a punk band do? The record company were going, 'What the…?!' We just stuck to our guns."

Secret Samadhi sold decently, as did all successive albums, but none matched the huge success of *Throwing Copper*. Like Stone Temple Pilots' first two albums and Bush's *Sixteen Stone*, it remains an album of the people rather than the critics.

Then in 2010 something strange happened. Live's well-cultivated air of placidity was shattered when Kowalczyk unexpectedly left the band. A supposed two-year hiatus became a permanent split after Taylor, Dahlheimer and Gracey sued the singer for breach of contract. Lawsuits and counter-lawsuits were filed. Kowalczyk was replaced by Christopher Shinn; Kowalczyk embarked on a solo career. "There was some ugliness," he says with dry understatement.

If that was a shock, then the two parties' out-of-the-blue reconciliation in 2016 was an even bigger one. Or maybe it wasn't – this was a band who had literally grown up together, after all.

"Basically, we missed each other," says Kowalczyk, "the uniqueness of what we do together, combined with the incredible history we have with each other."

Two years on, that split looks like nothing more than a bump in the long road that took Live out of smalltown America and brought them to the place they find themselves today.

"We came from York, Pennsylvania, and there was this eagerness to break out," he says. "And you can really hear it in the record and see it in the videos. And we weren't alone. There was such a community of bands at festivals that also had this thought of, 'Let's do something different, let's be ourselves.' There were so many authentically original voices during that period."

Someone recently asked Kowalczyk if he could talk to the guy in the *I Alone* video, what would he say? He laughs at the thought.

"I'd tell him to relax," he says. "Everything's going to be okay."

GETTY

SOLID BALL OF ROCK

SAXON
Virgin, 1991

Saxon's mid-80s stab at the US market had cost them dear. So no surprise that the dawn of the 90s saw them doubling down on their original no-nonse approach, even going so far as to make Germany their temporary home. It might have been released the same year as Nirvana's *Nevermind*, but with the barnstorming title track and the hymn to fallen rock stars *Requiem (We Will Remember)*, *Solid Ball Of Rock* showed Saxon we back at the top of their game. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"If Saxon ever needed a slice o' noise to leave them exactly where they are in everybody's estimation, then* Solid Ball Of Rock *could just be the one."*** Kerrang!

GENERATION TERRORISTS

MANIC STREET PREACHERS
Columbia, 1992

The build-up was the most exciting thing to happen to rock in decades. Repurposing '77 style nihilism and Hollywood glamour for a disaffected new generation, the Manics promised us a double album of non-stop decadence and ecstasy so potent we'd orgasm forever on rock'n'roll. And they very nearly delivered. Still one of the most effective punk albums ever made. **KM**

What they said at the time: ***"Imagine Guns N' Roses with brains."*** Q

Generation terrorists: the Manics in '92.

SOUND OF WHITE NOISE

ANTHRAX
Island, 1993

While several of their thrash peers struggled in the 90s, Anthrax moved forward by bringing in singer John Bush and taking on board influences from the grunge and industrial spheres. Producer Dave Jerden gave them a sharper focus, as songs like *Only*, *Hy Pro Glo* and *Black Lodge* delivered a darker atmosphere. The bold revamping worked – *Sound Of White Noise* was exciting and relevant. **MD**

What they said at the time: ***"Headbangers should have a ball with this."*** Spin

BLOOD SUGAR SEX MAGIK

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
Warners, 1991

They'd been a cult presence since 1983, but producer Rick Rubin gave the Chilis the focus they needed. Hard, fast and virtuosic, *Suck My Kiss* and *Give It Away* were islands of funk-rock exuberance among the singles-chart fodder. And *Under The Bridge* might sound played-out now, but back in 1991 it was a mesmerising anthem for the times. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"An ambitious effort that amounts to a culmination and blossoming of musical forces."*** Tampa Tribune

PURPLE

STONE TEMPLE PILOTS
Atlantic, 1994

Still smarting from the slings and arrows directed at them following their debut *Core*, STP needed to prove they were no grunge bandwagon jumpers. *Purple* did that with panache and clout. Musically expansive, ranging from the muscular to the folkish, and commercially loaded, it showed STP to be driving the genre forward rather than hitching a ride on it. **PH**

What they said at the time: ***"Rock'n'roll utterly without roots or, despite the pseudo-underground sheen, a real, defined sense of time or place."*** Entertainment Weekly

FAITH HOPE LOVE

KING'S X

Megaforce, 1990

45

Pearl Jam's Jeff Ament once claimed that King's X invented grunge. And nowhere was that better evidenced than on the Texan trio's third album. Locating the missing link between the celestial melody of The Beatles and the fuzzy heaviness of prime Motörhead, the likes of *We Are Finding Who We Are* and the euphoric *I'll Never Get Tired Of You* sound as unique now as they did then. **DE**

What they said at the time: ***"King's X wield the moldy art-rock sword and hone it to a hard, straight edge."*** Rolling Stone

THE BENDS

RADIOHEAD

Parlophone, 1995

44

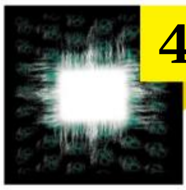
Having misfired with the patchy *Pablo Honey*, Radiohead got serious in 1995, crafting an album of bleak, bruised beauty that sat gloriously at odds with the goonish Britpop scene. Critically, while their later records grew obtuse and electronic, *Bends*-era Radiohead were still in love with the era's weapon of choice – a loud electric guitar – and they fused it to the best hooks of their career. With *Just*, *Bones* and *Sulk* supplying the balls, and *(Nice Dream)* and *Fake Plastic Trees* the beauty, this was Radiohead at their most human. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"The Bends will be one of, and quite possibly the album of the year."*** NME

AENIMA

TOOL

Zoo Entertainment, 1996



43

Although Tool would reach somewhat stadium acclaim with their two later releases *Lateralus* and *10,000 Days*, it's 1996's *Aenima* that signalled their move away from the hard-hitting alternative rock of *Undertow* and *Opiate* to the thoughtful prog arrangements of later years. Brimming with esoteric ideas and sounds, it's one of the most compelling alt.metal albums of the 90s. Three million sales paved the way for them to indulge their prog rock inclinations to the full in the next decade. **JE**

What they said at the time: ***"Tool shove their iron-spike riffing and shock-therapy polemics right up the claustrophobic dead end of so-called alternative metal."*** Rolling Stone

SWEET OBLIVION

SCREAMING TREES

Epic, 1992

42

Always innovative, Screaming Trees ditched grunge's Black Sabbath-meets-Black Flag format pretty quickly, and by *Sweet Oblivion*, their sixth album, they had fully evolved into a rock band of tremendous depth. Mark Lanegan's soulful, aching croak wrapped nimbly around the music, a sort of bummed-out classic rock that seemed both warmly familiar and cutting-edge. It's the greatest 70s album the 90s ever made. **KM**

What they said at the time: ***"So they're from Seattle. Screaming Trees aren't just another grunge band."*** Entertainment Weekly

BURNING TREE

BURNING TREE

Epic, 1990

41

If ever there was a band out of time, then it was Burning Tree. Not for them the hair-metal of the Crüe or the miserablism of the ascendent grunge corps. They were a power trio indebted to Cream and Hendrix, adept at wringing tripped-out belters. The pop-tinged *Crush* should have been a feelgood hit of the summer, while the epic *Baker's Song* is the best song the Black Crowes never wrote (although guitarist Marc Ford did end up serving time with the Crowes after Burning Tree imploded). **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"Burning Tree have something for everybody with ears wide enough apart to actually hold something in-between."*** Kerrang!

THE DIVISION BELL

PINK FLOYD

EMI, 1994

40

That the errant Roger Waters dismissed Pink Floyd's 1987 album *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*

Q&A

ROGER MANNING JR *from* JELLYFISH

Which bands inspired you when you were starting Jellyfish?

So many things, from the dawn of punk rock to progressive rock. From Yes and Genesis to The Damned, XTC and The Smiths. They modelled pop as its highest art form. They were a British Steely Dan in that way.

It seems that you took songcraft very seriously.

That's exactly what it was, studying a craft. Why, when I listen to a Brian Wilson song like *Don't Worry Baby* or *The Warmth Of The Sun*, do I feel like I've taken a drug, and when the song is over the drug has worn off? I wanted to figure out how I could do that, so I could shoot myself and an audience with my own drug.

Bellybutton came out at the time grunge was breaking. Lousy timing, right?

Jellyfish couldn't have been more opposite and unique. We were making music that was ultimately lighthearted, celebrational, many, many aspects. We fully understood that we couldn't be more different or frankly bizarre to everyone else around at the same time.

The band had a vivid image – kind of like psychedelic children's TV presenters.

Things had got very drab and boring; you can't laugh, you can't smile, you have to be drab. The Pearl Jams of the world embodied everything we didn't believe in. I missed the bands I grew up listening to, where everything was colourful and visual. Music was anything but jeans and a T-shirt for us.

Despite great reviews, Jellyfish never really made it beyond cult level. What do you think was the reason for that?

I think maybe it was that we were out of time. You could argue that if we'd come out in the sixties or seventies we'd have been more relevant.

The band split up after a second album, Spilt Milk. What was the reason?

Andy [Sturmer, co-founder, songwriter and drummer] and I had essentially been together for six or eight years. We were getting complacent and bored with each other. Our differences as people were starting to magnify, and musically the exact same thing was happening. When we started putting music together for our third record, it was clear we were on very different paths.

How do you look back on the band now?

With Jellyfish, you either totally got it or not. There were no middle of the road Jellyfish fans. There was no middle ground. **DE**

JELLYFISH: GETTY

as "quite a clever forgery", and his assessment of 1994's *The Division Bell* was that it was "nonsense from beginning to end" suggests that David Gilmour and co. had got under his skin. With Richard Wright (fired during the making of *The Wall*) now back as a full-time member and the band recording on Gilmour's house-boat studio, *The Division Bell* was a more cohesive record than its predecessor and showed that the band had evolved away from their former leader. It was a huge success, and Floyd's final mammoth stadium tour ensued. **JE**

What they said at the time: ***"Gilmour went to great lengths to ensure that* The Division Bell *was genuinely a group album."*** *Uncut*

SLAVE TO THE GRIND

SKID ROW
Atlantic, 1991

39

For their second album, Skid Row were intent on proving they weren't just soppy power ballads and a pretty face. Despite a platinum-selling debut of glammy hard rock, the band took a radical departure and with *Slave To The Grind* delivered an album full of crushing neo-thrash metal fuelled by frontman Sebastian Bach's snarling, punk-inspired mouth-for-war. Skid Row's startling about-face found them vaulting neatly over the glam-is-dead-grunge-is-king bloodbath of '91. **KM**

What they said at the time: ***"Integrity, passion, and the kind of manic, crackling energy that's largely been excised from MTV metal"*** *Spin*

EXTREME II: PORNOGRAFFITTI

EXTREME
A&M, 1990

38

Sugared-up acoustic hit *More Than Words* might have become one of the decade's most omnipresent ballads, but there was much more to the Boston foursome's career-topping second album. For one thing it was a mostly electric record, turbo-charging their funked-up rock cocktail with the likes of *Get The Funk Out* and *Pornograffitti* and showcasing Nuno Bettencourt's strident, virtuosic guitar playing to infectious effect. Arriving at the start of the decade, it bid a colourful, shamelessly buoyant farewell to the hair-tastic 80s. **PG**

Pantera: easily one of the defining guitar *and* metal albums of the decade.

PANTERA: EDDIE MALLUK/ATLASICONS.COM

What they said at the time: *"Pornograffitti **is a strong album, big on riffs and not short of tasty stir-fry rhythms."*** *Kerrang!*

COWBOYS FROM HELL

PANTERA
Atco, 1990

37

The Texans' 'debut' album, as far as much of the wider world was concerned (technically it was their fifth), *Cowboys From Hell* laid down the template for groove-metal – blending blues-based sensibilities with unrelentingly ferocious riffs and vocals. From the colossal title track through *Primal Concrete Sledge*, the full-pelt distortion of *Domination* and the rest, it paved the way for a grittier, angrier brand of heavy metal that blossomed from the 90s onwards. Easily one of the defining guitar *and* metal albums of the decade. **PG**

What they said at the time: ***"These Texans from hell have finally unleashed a spitting fireball of a record."*** *Kerrang!*

BELLYBUTTON

JELLYFISH
Charisma, 1990

36

Jellyfish emerged from their native San Francisco sounding so perfectly formed, it was as if they had been created in a laboratory. On the band's debut album *Bellybutton*, songwriters Andy Sturmer and Roger Manning distilled the very best bits of The Beatles, Queen, ELO, Cheap Trick and Wings into 10 wondrous songs, each one fizzing with wit, melody and invention, and bursting into choruses that all at once sounded box-fresh and ages old. Almost tragically, the other wonder was that this record and its just-as-fantastical successor, *Spilt Milk*, didn't find an audience. The very definition of lost treasure. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"Jarringly contemporary, melodic, rocking and… fab song after fab song."*** *Rolling Stone*

AMERICAN RECORDINGS

JOHNNY CASH
American/Sony, 1994

35

You wouldn't think your 81st album would mark a new beginning. Or a return to the beginning. But, crucially, producer Rick Rubin recognised that Johnny Cash's iconic craggy voice sounded best in a spare setting, as on his early Sun-label records. The emotional heft of a life lived through dark and light infuses every song, from classics (*Delia's Gone*) to unlikely covers (Danzig's *Thirteen*). This album not only revived Cash's importance, it also went a long way to assuring his legacy. **BDM**

What they said at the time: ***"The songs peer into the dark corners of the American soul."*** *Los Angeles Times*

Bob Dylan (left) rediscovered his 'A' game, while Bruce Springsteen was at his most uncertain but fighting back.

THE GHOST OF TOM JOAD

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
Columbia, 1995

34

Three years on from jettisoning the E Street Band and stumbling through the *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town* albums, Springsteen looked back to move ahead. Specifically to the brilliant *Nebraska*, the solo acoustic album he'd released in between *The River* and *Born In The USA*. *Tom Joad*'s hushed, mournful songs were also inspired by the dustbowl spirit of John Steinbeck's literary classic *The Grapes Of Wrath*, and here was The Boss at his most uncertain but also defiant, stripped bare but fighting back. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"Among the bravest work that anyone has given us this decade."*** *Rolling Stone*

KEEP THE FAITH

BON JOVI
Mercury, 1992

33

It's a fallacy that grunge killed the don't-bore-us-get-to-the-chorus big-hair battalion.

As Bon Jovi proved. Sure, Jon cut his hair, David Bryan favoured the piano over the synth on this album and there was more groove in the rhythms, but Jovi's first record of the new decade cemented their stadium status. The choruses were still massive (title track, *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*), the ballads even bigger (*Bed Of Roses*), and Jon still indulged his inner Bruce (*Dry County*). Meet the new decade, same as the old decade. **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"It's still a band of huge, oft-repeated hooks, yeomanly instrumental chops [and] bleating, undernourished lead vocals."*** *LA Times*

TIME OUT OF MIND

BOB DYLAN
Columbia, 1997

32

Without doubt, Dylan had a rotten 80s and the first half of his 90s wasn't any better. For *Time Out Of Mind* he re-hired Daniel Lanois, who had produced 1989's *Oh Mercy*, Dylan's only great, or even half-decent, record in more than a decade and rediscovered his 'A' game. Thanks to Lanois's distinctive touch, the album as a whole sounded substantial: resonant, deep and spacious. It was Dylan, though, who filled these 11 tracks with import, his dried husk of a voice accentuating their sense of meaning. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"It sounds as if at fifty-six he can't wait to be a full-fledged old codger."*** *Entertainment Weekly*

INNUENDO

QUEEN
Parlophone, 1991

31

Recorded with singer Freddie Mercury in the throes of Aids but refusing to publicly acknowledge the illness, what turned out to be Queen's final studio album could easily have been a maudlin affair. Instead it's a triumph. *Hitman* and *Headlong* rock hard, *I'm Going Slightly Mad* showed Mercury at his most playful, while *These Are The Days Of Our Lives* and *The Show Must Go On*, along with the album title, hinted at what most people realised all along. The mesmeric title track echoed *Bohemian Rhapsody* and was the band at their flamboyant, exploratory best. **JE**

What they said at the time: ***"Lavish, lush and thick with pomp and guitar."*** *San Francisco Chronicle*

DIZZY UP THE GIRL

GOO GOO DOLLS
Warner Bros, 1998

30

In the 80s it was the hair-metallers who wrote a big ballad for their mainstream breakthrough. In the 90s it was the turn of the ramshackle, DIY college radio crowd to file off their rough edges and announce themselves to the world. And Buffalo's Goo Goo Dolls did just that. *Iris* was the huge soundtrack hit, while *Slide* and *Broadway* proved that Johnny Rzeznik and Robby Takac's spiky songwriting had lost none of its bite under its new radio-friendly sparkle. **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"Let's just say that Iris fans won't be unsatisfied."*** *The Boston Phoenix*

IMAGES AND WORDS

DREAM THEATER
Atco, 1992

29

Dream Theater's 1989 debut album *When Dream And Day Unite* pitched the band somewhere between Rush and Metallica. Three years on, with a new label and a new singer in Canadian James LaBrie, the band made serious inroads into the mainstream, echoing the rise of Marilion a decade earlier. *Images And Words* projected a glossier sheen over the band's intricate prog-metal barrage. Most surprising of all, the eight-minute opening track, *Pull Me Under*, gave the band a bona fide hit. **JE**

What they said at the time: ***"They set standards and still perfect them, although they hardly appear to do so."*** *Rock Hard*

GETTY

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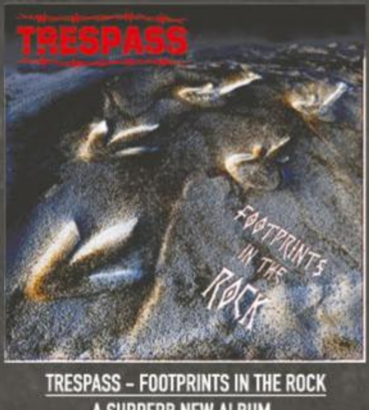

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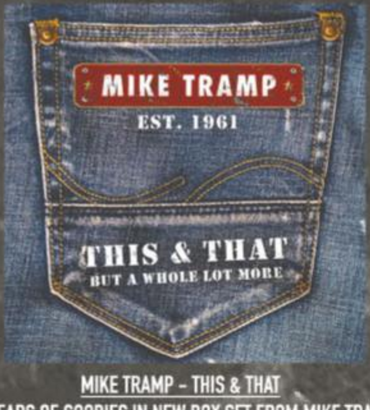

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For Those About To Get Rocked

In 1992, reeling from the death of their guitarist Steve Clark and facing the onset of grunge, **Def Leppard** were determined to keep the party going. The result was *Adrenalize* – hard rock's last great blockbuster album of a golden era.

Words: **Paul Elliott** Photos: **Ross Halfin**

28 ADRENALIZE
DEF LEPPARD
Mercury, 1992

It began with a question: *'Do you wanna get rocked?'* The answer came back loud and clear when Def Leppard's *Adrenalize* hit No.1 globally in 1992. For one of rock's biggest bands, it seemed like business as usual. In reality it was anything but.

If ever a band had to dig deep to make an album, it was Def Leppard with *Adrenalize*. They had done so before, in creating their 1987 album *Hysteria* after drummer Rick Allen lost his left arm in a car crash on New Year's Eve 1984, and had to reinvent the way he played, using a specially developed electronic kit. But in the making of *Adrenalize* the band suffered their darkest day – the death of guitarist Steve Clark on January 8, 1991, following a long struggle with alcoholism.

As Leppard singer Joe Elliott says now, looking back at that difficult time: "It was tough. Emotionally, so draining. But we didn't want to split up the band like Led Zeppelin did after John Bonham died. We were tying to keep ourselves from drowning."

Def Leppard made *Adrenalize* under intense pressure, both internal and external. In the absence of Steve Clark, it was left to Phil Collen, the band's other guitarist, to replicate their signature two-guitar sound. They also had to find a new producer at a time when their mentor Mutt Lange was busy working with another client, Bryan Adams. In addition, there was the burden of expectation to match an album that had sold fifteen million copies worldwide. "How the hell do you follow *Hysteria*?" says Elliott.

What they achieved with *Adrenalize* was, as with *Hysteria*, a triumph over adversity. Def Leppard was always, in Elliott's words, "an escapism band, for us and for everybody else". And never more so than on *Adrenalize*. It included a memorial to Steve Clark: a powerful, sombre track titled *White Lightning*. But as they made this album, one comment from Mutt Lange resonated deeply within the band. While acknowledging the impact of Clark's death, Lange told them: "People don't want to hear Def Leppard doing Leonard Cohen."

Elliott recalls: "A guy's just died and here we are making this euphoric, celebratory music. It seemed a bit weird. But we made a point of remembering who we are, what we do and what we do well." And it was the question *'Do you wanna get rocked?'* – the opening line from would be the album's opening track, *Let's Get Rocked* – which set the tone. For all the sadness that surrounded the making of it, *Adrenalize* was a celebration of the life-affirming power of rock'n'roll.

What they said at the time: ***"Def Leppard remain the ultimate radio rock band and Adrenalize is state-of-the-art."*** *Kerrang!*

In February 1992, one month before the release of *Adrenalize*, Joe Elliott ended up in tears when he spoke to me about the death of Clark and the band's efforts to save him. In a room at the St James Club in Hollywood, he said solemnly: "We'd lost Steve a year before he died. We couldn't do anything more for him."

It was in January 1978 that Steve Clark joined Def Leppard, five months after the band formed in Sheffield. At his audition, he played the end solo from Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Free Bird*. It was so good that Elliott said, without hesitation: "He's in."

In the band's early days they dreamed of emulating their heroes – Zeppelin, Lizzy, Queen. Those dreams had come true with *Hysteria*, and predecessor *Pyromania*, another multimillion seller. On stage, Clark was the classic guitar hero. Off stage, he was an introvert who became heavily dependent on alcohol. During the *Hysteria* tour, Clark got drunk only after shows or on days off. After that tour ended in 1988, his problem deepened. As Elliott explained: "Once we came off the road, Steve's routine became just drinking."

What the singer revealed about the last years of Clark's life was harrowing. Between 1989 and 1990 he had six separate spells in rehab. For a long period he remained a functioning member of the band. During the early songwriting sessions for *Adrenalize*, in which Mutt Lange was also involved, Clark co-wrote six of the 10 songs that were included on the album. It was when he was away from the band that Clark went off the rails. While on holiday in Minneapolis, he was found unconscious in a street, with an alcohol level in his blood higher than that which killed Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham in 1980; double the level that can induce coma. Clark was admitted to a psychiatric ward in Minneapolis. Elliott visited him there, and recalled: "It was basically like a nut house. I was looking at Clarkie thinking: 'What the fuck are you doing in here?' He looked like a dead man."

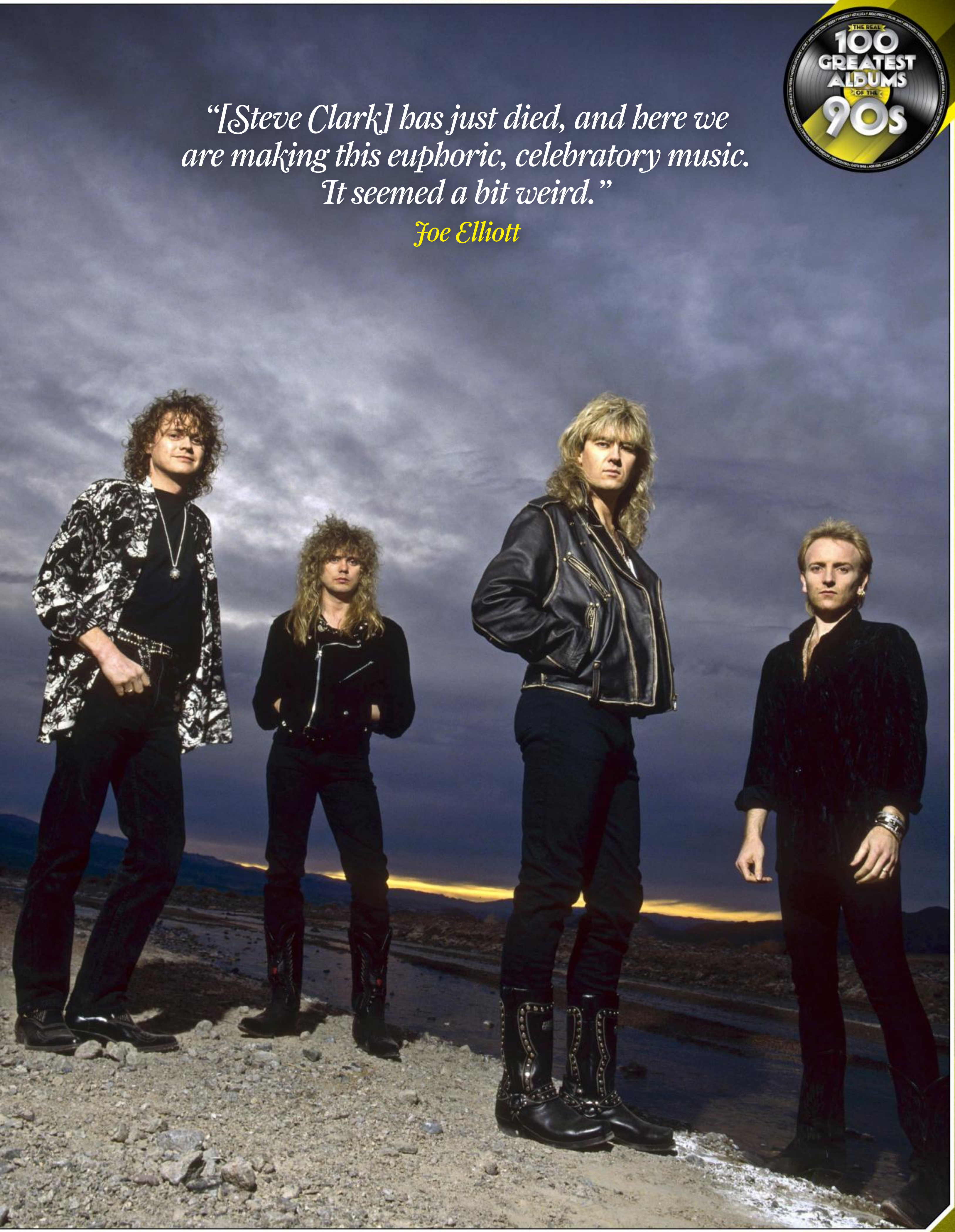
Later, in Dublin, Clark was present as the band began recording basic tracks for the album. He was also attending a rehab facility close by, where Elliott would sit with him during group therapy sessions. What he realised then was that Clark was in complete denial. "He thought he was fine," he said. "He didn't believe that he had a problem."

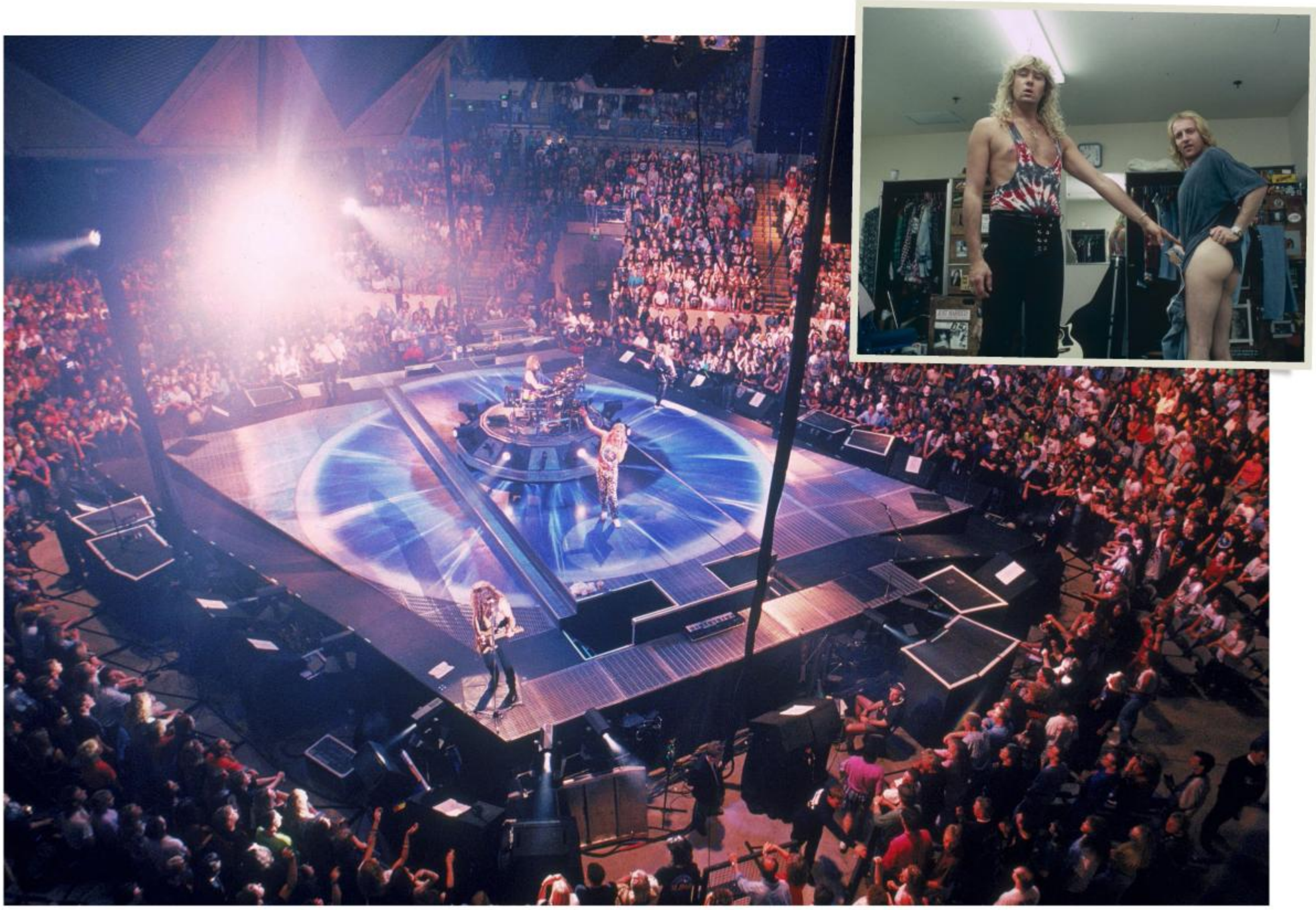
There was a deeper realisation that for Elliott was heartbreaking: "Steve was the nicest guy in the world. But he was a very complex person. I'd known for years, but I didn't know him at all. He had everything, yet he had nothing. You do your best to help. ▷

And then there were four: (l-r) Rick Allen, Rick Savage, Joe Elliott, Phil Collen.

"[Steve Clark] has just died, and here we are making this euphoric, celebratory music. It seemed a bit weird."

Joe Elliott





Towards the end it just got impossible. But you don't think he's actually going to die."

In September 1990, the band delivered an ultimatum to Clark. "We gave him a totally unconditional, very informal six months' leave of absence," Elliott said. "He absolutely hadn't been fired, we weren't gonna look for somebody else." Clark returned to London, where he had a new home in Chelsea. Elliott told him: "We're going to carry on working on the album, and come February, come back and see how things are."

In those last four months, Elliott and the other members of the band would call Clark from time to time. They also had mutual friends checking on him.

It was Cliff Burnstein, the band's co-manager, who broke the news to Elliott on January 9, 1991.

"I wasn't surprised," he admitted to me. "I was upset, the way you're upset when your ninety-nine-year-old granny dies. Steve's dad said to me that he wouldn't make his thirtieth birthday. He made it by six months. I cried my head off when Rick lost his arm. But when Steve died I didn't."

The coroner's report, dated February 27, cited the cause of death as "respiratory failure" due to consumption of "an excess of alcohol mixed with anti-depressants and painkillers". What haunted Elliott was the call he made to Clark on the day before he died. "I got his answering machine," he said. "That killed me for weeks. If I'd spoken to him, maybe it would have changed the next twenty-four hours…" Elliott might not have cried when Steve Clark died, but he did as he said that to me.

Clark was laid to rest at Wisewood Cemetery in Sheffield. Phil Collen didn't attend the funeral. "I loved Steve dearly," he says, "but I knew that a lot of people would show up at the funeral that weren't around when he needed help. And to he honest, I actually felt worse when he was alive." Collen was never asked to explain his decision.

"It's a very private matter," Elliott says. One image from the funeral has stuck in his mind ever since: "All I remember is being at the graveside, and watching Steve's mum Beryl grieving so desperately."

Def Leppard went back to work the very next day. As Elliott said in 1992: "We had to get on with our lives. We weren't going to lose those songs, because they were too good, and Steve just wouldn't have wanted us to quit anyway." He adds now: "When Steve passed away we'd been working as a four-piece for seven or eight months anyway, in spirit and physically."

> *"We wanted it to be a little less polished than Hysteria. We wanted it to rock a bit more."*
> *Joe Elliott*

Above: Leppard's popular in-the-round live stage set for the *Adrenalize* tour. Inset: Elliott and Collen get cheeky.

Even so, Collen struggled. "There was a period when I just didn't want to do it," he says. "It felt really wrong doing it without Steve. Joe had to talk me off the ledge: 'Come on, we wrote these songs with Steve…' In the end I knew he was right."

Def Leppard stuck together, just as they had after the trauma experienced by Rick Allen. "We had each other to lean on," Elliott said. "That's the great thing about a band." They also had Mutt Lange to guide them, albeit in a more limited role than before.

Lange had done so much to shape the band's sound that they had called him their "sixth member". As with *Pyromania* and *Hysteria*, Lange had co-written the songs for *Adrenalize*. But as the band began recording, Lange was still working on Bryan Adams's album *Waking Up The Neighbours*. So they turned instead to Lange's right-hand man, Mike Shipley, who had mixed *Hysteria* and engineered *Pyromania*. "We figured that us co-producing with Mike would be the next best thing to Mutt," Elliott said.

But Lange's influence continued throughout the making of *Adrenalize*. "Mutt was on the phone every day, trying to rally the troops," Elliott recalls. During breaks in Adams's schedule, Lange wrote with Leppard and contributed backing vocals for *Adrenalize* – another feature that was integral to the band's signature sound.

Phil Collen decided early on that he would play all the guitars on the album. He explains: "Why bring someone in who doesn't get what we're all about? I'd be teaching someone. The weird thing was that I had to learn Steve's parts from the demos we'd laid down together on four-track. It was like listening to a ghost; he was in the room. I just wanted to do him justice, to make it sound as close as I could to how it was with Steve."

The first stages of recording were at Wisseloord studios in Holland, where much of *Hysteria* was made. But, as Collen says, "that was costing a fortune". So operations were moved to Elliott's home in Dublin, where a studio had recently been installed. *Hysteria* had taken the best part of four years to record. But not *Adrenalize*. "By our standards we blitzed through it," Elliott said. "And we wanted this one to be a little less polished than *Hysteria*, with the edge that *Pyromania* had. We wanted it to rock a bit more."

Certainly there were echoes of *Hysteria* on *Adrenalize*. *Make Love Like A Man* was an anthem like *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, its tongue-in-cheek title described by Elliott as "totally taking the piss – not chest-beating macho bullshit". *Tonight* and *Have You Ever Needed Someone So Bad* were two finely crafted ballads in the style of *Love Bites*. *Tear It Down*, previously released as the B-side to *Animal*, was a no-brainer rock song like *Run Riot*. Best of all was *Stand Up (Kick Love Into Motion)*, with beautiful vocal harmonies, a song similar in feel to the title track from *Hysteria*.

The last two songs written for *Adrenalize*, after Clark's death, were *White Lightning* and *Let's Get Rocked*. Collen alone created the music for *White Lightning*, with direct reference to *Gods Of War*, the epic track from *Hysteria* that Clark wrote in homage to Led Zeppelin's *Kashmir*. In the words that Elliott wrote for *White Lightning* was Clark's story and those of other rock stars who died young, including Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. One line in the song, depicting the private hell of an addict, was painfully acute: '*And no one will ever hear you scream and shout.*' "I think it's the most personal, moving lyric I've ever written," he said, "because it's the only one that's specifically about someone we know." In that song, he was saying all the things that he couldn't get through to his friend. "We did say those things," he said. "He just didn't hear them."

So much emotion went into *White Lightning*. "By the time we put it to bed it was like we'd done group therapy," Elliott recalls. "After that we needed something completely ridiculous."

Cue *Let's Get Rocked*, its mood and title inspired by *Let's Go Crazy*, the explosive funk-rock blowout from Prince's classic album *Purple Rain*. "Phil and I were infatuated with Prince then," Elliott says. "We wanted *Let's Get Rocked* to be something he could have done. It was celebratory, written for a stadium." And if Elliott's lyrics were dumb and cartoonish, then no wonder – he wrote them after watching an episode of *The Simpsons*.

With this album there was one last drama, during the end stages of recording, when Mike Shipley contracted hepatitis, a potentially fatal liver disorder. "As usual another major trauma attacked us in the final hour," Elliott said with gallows humour: It definitely screwed him up for a while." Fortunately, Shipley recovered.

With the work done, the mood in the band was defiantly upbeat, as illustrated by the album's title. "There's no such word as 'adrenalize' in the dictionary," Elliott says, "but it sounded right. We wanted it to be like plugging the power back in, re-energising the band musically."

Steve Clark (left) with Leppard during the making of *Hysteria*.

Phil Collen (right) and former Whitesnake, guitarist Vivian Campbell, Clark's replacement in Def Leppard.

Adrenalize was released on March 31, 1992. In *Rolling Stone*, JD Considine wrote: "There's no overriding concept to the album, no sense of the group confronting its demons or wrestling with the problems of the world; instead, what we get is an unending string of energetic, hook-heavy, gosh-we-luv-'em songs about girls. A perfect Def Leppard album, in other words."

It was also an album completely out of step with what was happening in rock music at the time. Just two months earlier, Nirvana's *Nevermind* had topped the US chart. A new age of alternative rock had arrived, led by the Seattle grunge bands – Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Alice In Chains – and Californian outliers Faith No More and Jane's Addiction. It was the most seismic change in popular music since punk in the late 70s, with *Smells Like Teen Spirit*, its revolutionary anthem, ringing out like the last bell for the big-haired stars of 80s rock.

Elliott says now that he was largely oblivious to it all: "When we were making *Adrenalize* it was still the arse end of the eighties, from a mental point of view. The nineties hadn't kicked in. We weren't aware of what Kurt Cobain was doing until the album was out."

Not so Phil Collen: "With grunge, I saw it coming a mile off. There were so many awful hair-metal bands around. Something had to happen. Nirvana and Pearl Jam were a breath of fresh air."

In this turbulent time, some stars from the 80s were big enough to ride out the storm. Guns N' Roses were riding high with *Use Your Illusion I* and *II*. Bon Jovi, with their 1992 album *Keep The Faith*, had what Manic Street Preachers bassist Nicky Wire called "a brilliant reinvention". And there ▷

was still a place for Def Leppard. "People were glad we were still around," Elliott says. "*Adrenalize* was number one in America for six weeks. It was number one in around thirty counties. It was massive."

Just a few days after the album's release, the new guitarist in Def Leppard was announced: Vivian Campbell, formerly of Dio and Whitesnake. Behind the scenes, the band had already tried out other guitarists, including John Sykes, also ex-Whitesnake, and Adrian Smith, at that time between tenures in Iron Maiden. As Collen explains: "There was no formal audition with John and Adrian, they just came and played with us for a while. It was more about us getting a sense of what they were like as people." Sykes ended up singing backing vocals on *Adrenalize*.

"John could sing his ass off," Elliott says. "And he wrote *Still Of The Night* for Whitesnake. Adrian I adore, and in the end it worked out well for him because he's back in Maiden where he belongs. We also tried out a young unknown kid from Birmingham, Huey Lucas. Great player, but his voice wasn't that strong. Vivian was always the number-one candidate. For us it wasn't about how well you could play, it was more about how well you can sing. And more importantly, we've got to get on with this person."

Leppard at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert at Wembley Stadium, April 20, 1992, where they played *Animal, Let's Get Rocked* and Queen's *Now I'm Here.*

On April 20, the new-look Def Leppard performed at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert For Aids Awareness at Wembley Stadium, at which the surviving members of Queen, joined by a stellar supporting cast including David Bowie, Robert Plant, Elton John, Guns N' Roses and Metallica, paid tribute to their late singer. With an audience of 80,000 in the stadium and more than a billion people watching on live TV, it was the perfect set-up for Leppard's forthcoming world tour.

"The tour was huge," Elliott says. "It was bigger than *Hysteria*." It included a victorious homecoming show at the newly built Don Valley Stadium, where the band played to 50,000 people. The final leg was in North America at the end of that year. "I remember being on our private plane," the singer says, "flying over Manhattan at two in the morning, having just finished a bunch of sell-out shows, and going: 'Yeah, about this grunge thing…'"

> *"I remember being on our private plane, having just finished a bunch of sell-out shows, and going: 'Yeah, about this grunge thing…'"*
>
> *Joe Elliott*

Adrenalize sold seven million copies worldwide. In the US the singles were not as successful as those from *Hysteria*, with only *Let's Get Rocked* and *Have You Ever Needed Someone So Bad* making the Top 20. But in the UK they had four big hits.

It was after *Adrenalize* that Def Leppard struggled. "Everything changed after that," Collen says. "In the late nineties it went tits-up for a while, but we soldiered on." Their 1996 album *Slang* was an alt.rock-influenced volte-face, but their last album of that decade, *Euphoria*, was a return to Leppard's classic sound.

For Elliott and Collen, looking back on *Adrenalize* from a distance of 26 years there are mixed feelings. Elliott thinks of it as the end of an era, "the last in a trilogy" after *Pyromania* and *Hysteria*. What he hears now in *Adrenalize* is the early roots of Leppard. "Other than *White Lightning* the music is very mid-seventies glam," he says. Collen is more critical: "With *Hysteria* we felt that we'd created a slightly new rock genre. It was so creative and so left-field. With *Adrenalize* we were copying that formula."

What *Adrenalize* lacked was the shock of the new that *Hysteria* had: the blockbuster production that Collen describes as "*Star Wars* for the ears"; the spirit of adventure in songs such as *Pour Some Sugar On Me, Rocket* and *Animal*. With *Hysteria* Def Leppard were breaking new ground; with *Adrenalize* they were holding ground. In the circumstances, it was more than enough.

They had dug deep to make this album. And the last two songs they wrote for *Adrenalize* would remain powerfully symbolic: *White Lightning* the epitaph for the friend they lost, *Let's Get Rocked* the anthem with which they moved on.

Adrenalize is now available digitally. Leppard play the Royal Albert Hall on March 25 in aid of Teenage Cancer Trust, and tour the UK in December.

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REEVES GABRELS talks about DAVID BOWIE

As well as playing guitar on the album, you were Bowie's co-producer and co-writer on Earthling. What was the aim with that record?

There was talk that the album was jumping on the drum'n'bass bandwagon, but it's more influenced by what came to be called electronica. David loved [electronic artists] Photek and Tricky. Those influences were in the air at the time. I never told David this, but in my head I was thinking more of *Won't Get Fooled Again* – the muscular rock band with sequential information.

How did the songwriting collaboration work between the two of you?

We were both into collages. I had gotten into Pro Tools [sound recording and production software], sampling – which now seem like ancient technology. So I'd create these electronic sequences, we'd dump them into the computer, sit in the studio with our little travel guitars, and play and sing against the backing track. The other thing, both of us were art-school kids, so we loved the Burroughs cut-up method. Lyrically, David had been doing it by hand for years. And then a friend came up with a Mac program called the Verbasizer. All you had to do was put in a paragraph and it would shuffle it up. So 'It will end in tears' might come out as 'It will end in chrome' [laughs].

Doesn't the track Dead Man Walking have a connection to Led Zeppelin?

David said that back in the sixties, Jimmy Page had shown that main riff to him. Jimmy said: "I've got this riff and I can't do anything with it. Do you want it?" It does sound fairly Page-y, like a mutated Johnny Burnette Trio thing.

On the Earthling tour, the band reinvented some of Bowie's old hits.

He hated playing things just like the record. He had the temperament and curiosity of a true musician. And he viewed music as art. In the thirteen years I was with him, he only gave me two comments. One: "Turn up." And two: "Why are you playing parts so close to the record?" He wanted me to dress songs up in the clothes we're wearing now.

What's your opinion of Earthling today?

It's my favourite record I did with David. We did have a sense while we were doing it that we were making something we hadn't heard. And that was always pretty much key to most of my time with David, the fundamental manifesto – do something new that captured the zeitgeist of the time. BDM

EARTHLING

DAVID BOWIE
Virgin, 1997

27

The Prius of rock, Bowie was doing hybrid before hybrid was cool. As with much of his best work, *Earthling* juxtaposes seemingly non-related elements – aggressive guitar work and electronica. It's fused together melodies worthy of his 70s heyday, especially on singles *Little Wonder* and *Telling Lies*. Bowie described *Earthling* as a "textural diary" of how it felt to be living in the last years of the millennium. And as usual it was also an accurate prediction of the future. **BDM.**

What they said at the time: ***"A richly textured return to excellence."*** *Seattle Times*

THE COLOUR AND THE SHAPE

FOO FIGHTERS
Roswell, 1997

26

Dave Grohl hadn't quite shaken off the 'grunge Ringo' tag, but his band's second album showed the shape of rock music for the next millennium. The urgent rush of *Monkey Wrench* combined a thunder-punch rhythm with a sense of melody that let that little bit more light in through the curtains, the fragile *February Stars* showed that Grohl had come of age as a vocalist, while the jazzy *See You* demonstrated that there was still a maverick spirit at the heart of Foo Fighters' blossoming arena rock. **JS**

What they said at the time: ***"The first album lacked the sheer visceral attack that thrills this time round."*** *Melody Maker*

PAINKILLER

JUDAS PRIEST
Columbia, 1990

25

Priest's output during the mid-to-late 80s had suggested they were floundering, and had been usurped by a new generation of metal heroes, so *Painkiller* was a crucial album for the band. And not just because they themselves were revitalised. As they got heavier and tougher, taking elements from thrash and adapting them to their own style, Priest gave metal itself renewed impetus, and set a template for what followed in the next decade. Tracks like *Painkiller* and *All Guns Blazing* symbolised the fact that the genre still had much to offer. **MD**

What they said at the time: ***"A welcome return for these acknowledged masters."*** *Kerrang!*

COVERDALE PAGE

COVERDALE PAGE
EMI, 1993

24

It was the alliance that only A&R supremo John Kalodner foresaw; a textbook case of the master teaming up with the apprentice. And yet with Zeppelin out of the limelight for so long and Whitesnake's domination of the US charts still a fairly recent memory, Jimmy and David met on more of an equal footing than you might have expected. The pairing was never going to last, of course, but on *Shake My Tree*, *Pride & Joy* and others sparks flew. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"This has to be a joke, right? No. In fact it's a master class from the old school."*** *RAW*

WELCOME TO SKY VALLEY

KYUSS
Elektra, 1994

23

The reason Josh Homme's Queens Of The Stone Age lack his former, greater band Kyuss's heft

COVERDALE & PAGE: WILLIAM HAMES/ATLASICONS.COM; REEVES GABRELS: GETTY

and ballast can be expressed in just two words: Scott Reeder. Nowhere is the former Kyuss bassist better heard, or felt, than on this, his first with them, and the third and most fully realised of their four albums. Like its predecessor *Blues For The Red Sun*, *Welcome To Sky Valley* was really all about the might of Homme's and Reeder's dinosaur riffing, only more so and on seismic opener *Gardenia* and *Demon Cleaner* seemingly taking it to infinity and beyond. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"It should come with its own neck brace."*** *Entertainment Weekly*

TEMPLE OF THE DOG

TEMPLE OF THE DOG
1991, A&M

One of the greatest albums to emerge from the grunge scene was born from one of the countless tragedies that would end up defining it. Mother Love Bone's Andy Wood, a flatmate of Soundgarden's Chris Cornel, was among the first of the drug casualties, and this album, full of rage and catharsis, was a response.

Having gathered and joined Wood's MLB bandmates in the studio, Cornell and co's tribute to his friend is damn-near perfect, from the elegiac *Say Hello 2 Heaven*, through *Reach Down* with Mike McCready's epic guitar solo, to the MTV hit *Hunger Strike* with background vocals that introduced some surfer dude called Eddie Vedder to the world. **SL**

What they said at the time: ***"There are delicate dirges, fresh-faced headbanging stompers, even something of an alternative-rock power ballad."*** *Entertainment Weekly*

MONSTER MAGNET: GETTY

RUST IN PEACE

MEGADETH
Capitol, 1990

Diverse, powerful and a showcase for guitarist/vocalist Dave Mustaine's musical brilliance, Megadeth's fourth album was their finest. The band's classic line-up is on peerless form on now timeless songs like *Hangar 18* and *Holy Wars… The Punishment Due*. It proved beyond doubt that Megadeth were more than just a thrash band. **MD**

What they said at the time: **"Rust In Peace *carries Megadeth's individuality into a broader, more open musical arena."*** *Rolling Stone*

DEFINITELY MAYBE

OASIS
Creation, 1994

No album defines its times better than *Definitely Maybe*. From Manchester they came, as arrogant as cocaine. Talking a good game, they delivered in spades with an iconic debut album that their detractors claimed was too derivative – not an accusation you could ever level at The Beatles', Stones' or Led Zeppelin's first albums… Oh.

Monster Magnet: a swirling kaleidoscope of a concept album.

(Left) Jimmy Page and David Coverdale: a textbook case of the master teaming up with the apprentice.

For years, British indie music had been scared to rock. So when Oasis hit the pub circuit, word spread like a virus. With Liam Gallagher's street-sharp sullen insolence and brother Noel's casual compositional nous, Oasis hijacked soft southern Britpop, euthanised grizzled grunge and, cranking its production beyond epic, laid down an album for the ages. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"Few other debut albums have captured a band at such a fully realised aspect, or are capable of scorching the soul with so many jaw-jarringly great pop moments."*** *NME*

POWERTRIP

MONSTER MAGNET
A&M, 1998

Solidifying mainman Dave Wyndorf's eternal majesty as one of the greatest lyricists in all of rock'n'roll, *Powertrip* is a swirling kaleidoscope of a concept album, although the only real concept is that Black Sabbath, comic books and weed are all really fuckin' cool. A monster from end to end it mixes the brainy, drug-soaked rush of Hawkwind with conventional cartoon rock'n'roll heroism and creates a brand new world of its own, one virtually untouched by any of the nu/emo/alt.metal bullshit that infected the latter half of the 90s. **KM**

What they said at the time: ***"A virtual send-up of the seven deadly sins,* Powertrip *is a crash course in otherworldly sounds and metal through the ages."*** *Las Vegas Sun*

Saved By The Blues

At the beginning of the 1990s, **Gary Moore** was disillusioned, depressed and effectively washed up. Then he stepped into a sharp suit, returned to the blues and began the most unlikely reinvention of the decade.

Words: **Mick Wall**

By the summer of 1989, Gary Moore didn't know who he was any more. Nor did anyone else. At 37, he seemed to have shot his lot. Wherever you'd been, he'd been there already. Whatever you'd done, he'd already grown sick of. Blues, rock, jazz, folk, top of the charts, off the charts, big success, total failure. Whatever you thought you knew best, Gary knew better. Now, though, he appeared lost.

Bumping into him one morning at the Roppongi hotel in Tokyo, in May 1989, he seemed so down he could barely move his lips. I'd first met him in the mid-70s, during his brilliant but ill-fated spell in Thin Lizzy, and kept in contact. Gary had never exactly been the life and soul of anybody's party, but he was always engaged, on the money, rarely at a loss. Now, though, he appeared not sullen, more crestfallen, like he'd had a bellyful.

"Good morning," I'd chirped.

"Is it?" he said.

I was there doing a story on Metallica. They were the inventors of thrash metal, a genre of music as far removed from the blues-rock-Celtic-folk-pop thing Moore now found himself doing a decade after he'd left Thin Lizzy as it was possible to imagine back then.

When I mentioned this, he looked at me like I'd just shat the bed. But when I told him where they were playing – two nights at the Yoyogi National arena, capacity 14,000 – he simply put his sunglasses on and walked off without a goodbye.

Later I got it. Moore had been 'big in Japan' for years, but he was only playing the Nakano Sun Plaza Hall, capacity around 2,000; the sort of modest venue the guitarist had long become accustomed to playing.

He was never one to hang around – he'd quit every band he'd ever been in, no matter how successful – and word round the campfire was that Gary Moore was on the verge of saying sayonara to everything.

With his solo career in the doldrums, he hardly even toured much any more. He felt lost and hopeless, he said, walking around Tokyo that summer. He told me: "I felt like a cunt when I looked in the dressing room mirror. I thought: 'Fuck this. I can't do this any more. Let's leave this to the younger guys.' I wanted to look like how I felt – a grown man."

Moore's response was unexpected – and also successful beyond his wildest imaginings. Within a year, he'd shed his old heavy metal skin and reinvented himself as a sharp-suited bluesman. The next album he made, the sublime, fluid, quietly influential *Still Got The Blues*, may have seemed like a drastic left-turn, but in reality it was the sound of a man coming full circle and finally rediscovering himself.

18 STILL GOT THE BLUES

GARY MOORE

Virgin, 1990

What they said at the time: ***"This isn't the ultimate party LP, admittedly, but you can't argue with songs and playing of such a calibre."*** RAW

"Gary could play any kind of stuff," says Brian Downey, former Thin Lizzy drummer and a friend of Moore's from when they were kids on the streets of Belfast. "But I can tell you for a fact, blues was always his first love, from when we were kids. He had a great blues repertoire. He could pick them out of the air."

For Gary Moore – a purist instrumentalist, raised on blues, turned on by rock and elevated by jazz – the 1980s had been an uphill struggle, almost a betrayal of his roots. In 1979 he had walked out on Thin Lizzy just as they were having their biggest-selling studio album, *Black Rose*, because, he said, "I looked at Phil [Lynott] and thought: 'If this is what being a rock star is about, I don't want anything to do with it.'" He was referring to the rampant drug abuse that would eventually see Lynott die at just 36.

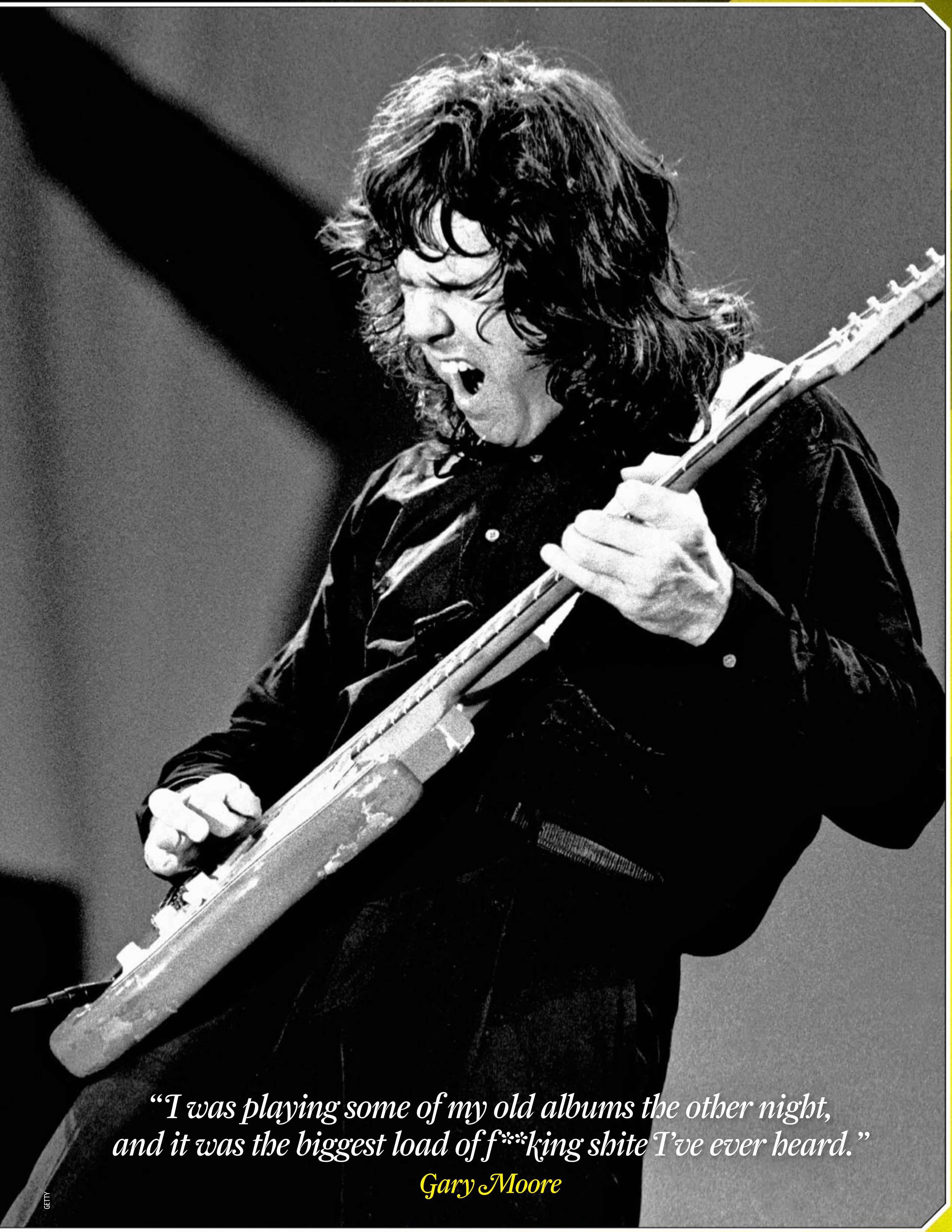
But instead of following his dream and making a successful career out of being the musician's musician – but with that extra gloss of stardom – Moore had allowed himself to be thrown out of the fire and into the frying pan.

His solo single *Parisienne Walkways* – an early dry run for the stunning title track of *Still Got The Blues*, complete with cathedral-like guitar solo – had been Top 10 in the UK when he quit Lizzy. But instead of trying to build on its blues deluxe direction, Moore flirted with heavy metal (G Force), prog (Greg Lake Band), nearly joined Ozzy Osbourne's first solo band, before settling for the Lizzy-lite that characterised his solo albums for the rest of the decade, up to and including his only big solo hit, in 1985, *Out In The Fields* – in partnership with Phil Lynott.

It was all a far cry from the Belfast boy that first picked up a knackered old acoustic guitar when he was just eight. Although he was left-handed, he forced himself to play right-handed. He formed his first band, the Beat Boys, playing Beatles hits. Then at age 13 he had what he described as "this massive conversion". That was in 1965, the year *John Mayall's Bluesbreakers With Eric Clapton* album – aka *Beano* – was released.

"That was the album that proved there could be more to music than the stuff you heard on the radio or TV," he told me. "Clapton left the Bluesbreakers not long after that to form Cream. I couldn't understand why he would leave a group as good as that."

It was a life-changing period in Moore's young life that he would later recall on the sleeve of *Still Got The Blues*: the image of the young boy in his bedroom, playing guitar, through a Marshall amp,



*"I was playing some of my old albums the other night, and it was the biggest load of f**king shite I've ever heard."*

Gary Moore

GETTY

Above: Gary Moore during the mixing of ***Still Got The Blues*** at Hook End Studio near Reading, January 16, 1990.

MAIN: GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX; INSET: ALAMY

along to a mono record player, with a poster of Jimi Hendrix on the wall.

"Loved Hendrix, loved Cream, but never saw them. But I did see the Bluesbreakers play live as a teenager when they came to Belfast, at Club Rado. I saw Mayall there with [Clapton's replacement] Peter Green, who, again, became a massive influence on me."

By the time Moore first met future Lizzy drummer Brian Downey, when he was 15, he was playing strictly blues.

"He was the supreme blues guitar player," says Downey. "It's where his heart was, at all moments of the day. Way, way much more than it ever was on the rock side."

Moore's big break came when he joined Downey and his pal Phil Lynott in a Dublin-based band called Skid Row. When Lynott was fired from Skid Row – going off to eventually form Thin Lizzy – Moore moved with Skid Row to London, where he finally met his blues hero Peter Green at a gig at the Marquee.

"Peter asked me if I wanted to borrow his guitar [Green's precious 1959 Gibson Les Paul]," Moore recalled. "All through the Bluesbreakers and Fleetwood Mac he had played that particular guitar… and so I jumped at the chance."

> *"The suit was to send a message to rock fans that what I was doing now wasn't something they were going to like."*
>
> Gary Moore

Green's life was then falling apart. Acid had blown his mind and split Fleetwood Mac and left him practically living on the street. A few days after the Marquee show, Green called Moore and offered to sell him his prize-guitar.

"I told him there was no way I could afford it, but he said if I sold my main guitar [a Gibson SG], then whatever I got for it I could give it to him and then it would be like swapping guitars. It's the best guitar I have ever played… it has a magic all its own and a sound that I've never heard from any other guitar."

When, nearly 20 years later, Moore came to record *Still Got The Blues*, it was Green's Les Paul he played on the title track. He also dedicated the album to 'Greeny'.

In London in the summer of 1989, reflecting on where it had all gone good-not-great, Moore told me he now viewed his career as "like a dog chasing its tail". He had got home from Japan and sat there flicking through his own albums, playing a track or two from each – and felt disgusted with himself, he said.

"Suddenly I didn't know who'd made those albums. I didn't recognise myself in any of them any more. I thought: 'Fuck it. I've got to do something about this.' But I didn't know what.

"Then I picked up my guitar again and this little blues thing just came out all by itself. And I realised that was what happened every time I picked up the guitar. It was always a blues that came first, because that was the music that came naturally to me. I thought: 'Hmm…'"

Original Thin Lizzy guitarist Eric Bell recalls a conversation he had with Moore at this time: "He said: 'You know, I was playing some of my albums the other night, from G-Force to some of my own things later on, and it was the biggest load of fucking shite I've ever heard!' He said: 'I don't wanna play like that any more – widdle, widdle, widdle, up and down the neck as fast as possible. It's a load of fucking bollocks!'

"I was going: 'Fuck, mate, it's not that bad'. And he was going: 'No. I'm pissed off with it.' He said: 'Listen, do you remember any of the songs from when we were doing the blues circuit in Belfast?' I gave him a list of about maybe ten or twelve titles."

These included *Too Tired* (Albert Collins), *As The Years Go Passing By* (Albert King), *Pretty Woman* (Albert King), *All Your Love* (Otis Rush but first heard by Bell and Moore on Mayall's Beano album) and *The Stumble* (Freddie King). All eventually surfaced on *Still Got The Blues* and its later expanded editions.

"About six months later, I'm walking through Shepherd's Bush mall and there's this giant billboard with a life-size poster of Gary – in a suit – saying: '*Still Got The Blues* – New Album Out Now.' And I just stopped and looked at it. I couldn't believe it. I thought: 'Fuck me, he's actually gone and done it."

It had always been in him. *Still In Love With You*, the 1974 Lizzy track with Moore's spine-tingling solo (credited solely to Lynott but which was actually based on a Moore blues from 1969) was another future echo. So that when he decided to make a pure blues album it suddenly all made sense to him – if not to his label.

Virgin blinked at the idea of a purist blues album, suggested marketing it as a 'side project', or as Gary put it, "some fucking novelty thing. I wasn't having that."

As he did with every aspect of his life, Moore demanded his latest musical passion be taken deadly seriously. After all, he had known the blues like few others.

"He could be very moody," says Don Airey, Moore's former Colosseum II bandmate who played keyboards on *Still Got The Blues*. "The trouble with Gary was he wasn't really in control of what was coming through him. As soon as he put the guitar on, whatever it was, it would pour out of him. He couldn't stop it. He was a genius, really. And I suppose that sort of thing always comes at a price."

Not that the *Still Got The Blues* album was overly melancholic. Indeed it positively bursts with joy on most of its tracks, half Moore originals, half blues classics. Adding authenticity were guest appearances from two genuine blues giants: Albert Collins and Albert King.

Moore later confessed he'd never heard of Albert Collins in his life when Virgin exec John Wooler played him the guitarist's roughhouse blues *Too Tired*, but thought his playing "incredible". According to Wooler, "Albert Collins came in and they got *Too Tired* down in three takes."

When Moore then asked Wooler to track down Albert King to play on his peacocking *Oh Pretty Woman*, he found him in Memphis, offered him a First Class plane ticket and flew him straight to the studio. "For Albert it was all about getting down to the studio, doing the song and going home," he recalls.

First though, King told Moore off for getting the lyrics wrong. Then, while searching for his pipe-cleaning knife, emptied a pocketful of live bullets on to the table. Turned out Albert was an honorary sheriff and had the badge to prove it. Lesson learned: you don't mess with the King, baby.

The sessions quickly gathered momentum. Horns and string sections were written by Airey, and specially recorded at Abbey Road. The George Harrison track *That Kind Of Woman* was done at Harrison's own studio as a demo. The Stevie Ray Vaughan tribute Moore wrote, *Texas Strut*, was brilliant. It was also wincingly timely, released just five months before SRV died in a helicopter crash.

To his regret, Moore didn't manage to pin down Peter Green to play on the album, although Moore played his hero's precious Les Paul on the title track and the subsequent tour.

The King and I: Moore with Albert King, who guested on the *Still Got The Blues* album, in 1990.

ALAMY

Released to immediate acclaim in March 1990, *Still Got The Blues* became, fittingly, Moore's biggest-selling album of his career, the signature recording he never thought he'd get round to making. Yet somehow he did, and just as it appeared it was too late.

Everything about *Still Got The Blues* seemed special, preordained. From the beguiling cover shot of the boy in his bedroom playing guitar – clear signage of Moore's attempt to somehow "come home to where I started", as he put it – to the new, decidedly un-rock image he presented to the world following its release: suited and booted, older and deeper, fierce and fierier than ever.

At first it seemed an oddity. Blues rock was still the preserve of fancy-hat and bandana-wearing road cowboys like Stevie Ray Vaughan, Michael Katon and George Thorogood, not the kind of manicured sound and image of Moore's new incarnation. Clapton had been wearing Armani for years, but Slowhand was already a legend, and so he could do what he wanted.

"The only reason I put a suit on is because I wanted to send out a very clear message to rock fans that what I was doing now wasn't necessarily something they were going to like," Moore told me at the time. "I wanted to start with a clean slate, and the suit seemed like a good way of getting that message across quickly."

In 1990, no one outside his hard-core fan orbit really knew or cared much who Gary Moore was anymore. Suddenly, that all changed. To see the album – the first solo release he hadn't bent over backwards trying to turn into a hit – then sell more than three million copies worldwide was, Moore later told me, "the most satisfying moment of my life, and the most mysterious".

> *"If it wasn't for guys like Gary Moore, I wouldn't exist. He proved that the blues could rock."*
>
> *Joe Bonamassa*

Moore's reinvention helped shape a generation of new bluesmen. "If it wasn't for guys like Gary Moore, I wouldn't exist," says Joe Bonamassa. "He not only proved that the blues could rock, but it could draw a crowd as well. All of which made a huge impression on me."

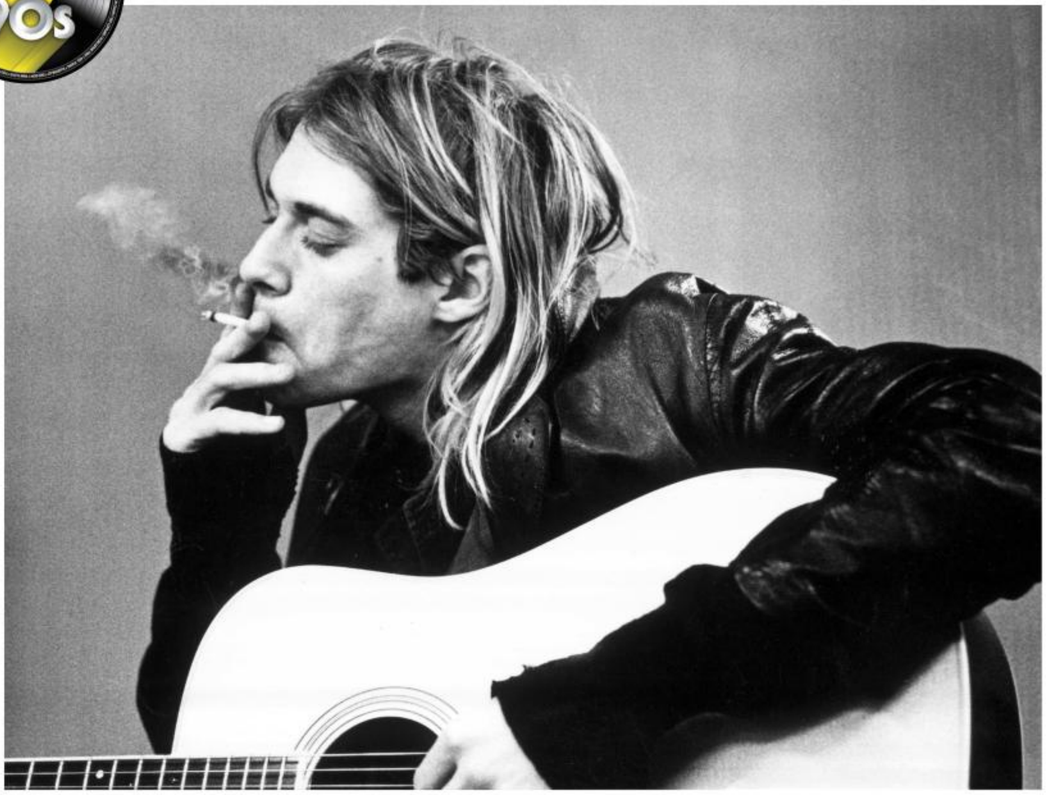
But it went beyond the suited-up blues rock guys. "Gary Moore is definitely in my list of top-five guitar influences," says Metallica guitarist Kirk Hammett. "I remember the first time hearing his blues album and just getting totally blown away. I was so inspired that I wrote a couple riffs just based on his sound and his feel. And those riffs ended up in *The Unforgiven* on [Metallica's breakthrough 1991 record] the Black Album."

Brian Downey, who played drums on four tracks on *Still Got The Blues*, sums up Moore's story of the blues perfectly: "I wasn't really interested in his rock output. They weren't as melodic and structured as the Lizzy albums had been, he was getting into that heavy metal thing more. To this day I couldn't tell what albums he made after Lizzy. But the blues album was great. I thought he really went somewhere great with that."

Years ago, Moore and I had talked about his affinity with the blues, how it was where his heart had always truly lay. And he pondered the future – for himself and for the music he loved so much.

"People ask me: 'Where do the blues go next?' I always answer: 'They've already been everywhere, all round the world a million times.' The point is where the blues takes you next. But it's always been there, and continues to be all these years later, which is what makes it such an important form of music."

He paused, then added: "For me it's not so much a case of still got the blues as that the blues has still got me."



RAZORS EDGE

AC/DC

Albert/EMI, 1990

Back in the early 90s, things were not looking too great for AC/DC. They'd stumbled their way through most of the 80s, but this album put them back on track.

Teaming up with Bruce Fairbairn was a masterstroke – the Bon Jovi/Aerosmith producer lifted the band out of their multi-album-spanning slumber. Yes, in the cold light of day tracks like *Mistress For Christmas* and *Shot Of Love* are bloody awful, but *Fire Your Guns*, *Money Talks* and of course *Thunderstruck* were light years ahead of anything the band had put out for the best part of a decade. Of course, the missing apostrophe in the title is less forgivable. **RC**

What they said at the time: ***After a few albums that sounded like old ideas warmed over once too often, this is a near-comeback."*** Rolling Stone

NO MORE TEARS

OZZY OSBOURNE

Epic, 1991

Ozzy's second album to feature Zakk Wylde on guitar, *No More Tears* was smoother and sleeker than its three-year-old predecessor *No Rest For The Wicked*. Almost half of its lyrics, including the ballad *Mama, I'm Coming Home*, were written by Lemmy, which raised the bar somewhat.

Embracing the video age, a colourful and dramatic promo for the album's title song remains among the best filmed during what was a competitive era, complementing a song that remains a career highlight. Significantly, the track *I Don't Wanna Change The World* won Ozzy a Grammy for Best Metal Performance With Vocal.

Is *No More Tears* Ozzy's last great solo album? Only time will tell. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"His most personal record since* Diary Of A Madman. *It's just Ozzy being Ozzy, and what's wrong with being Ozzy?"*** Kerrang!

NEVERMIND

NIRVANA

DGC, 1991

If Guns N' Roses had indelibly stained the 80s' shiny arena-rock template with blood, spunk and spittle, a few years later Nirvana ripped it to pieces. Butch Vig's production tidied the Seattle trio's sometimes chaotic, muddy live noise and finished it with a crystal-sharp edge and a visceral crunch. It helped to make *Smells Like Teen Spirit* a huge MTV hit, and the album that followed soon after it proved that Nirvana had more than just a monster sound. Stunning songs and outsider attitude backed up Kurt Cobain's wounded tiger of a vocal delivery. If ever there was an album that could justifiably be described as 'era-defining', it is surely this one. **JS**

***Nevermind*'s stunning songs and outsider attitude backed up Kurt Cobain's wounded tiger of a vocal delivery.**

What they said at the time: ***"You'll be humming all the songs for the rest of your life – or at least until your CD/tape/album wears out."*** Melody Maker

WILDFLOWERS

TOM PETTY

Warner Bros, 1994

Ageing gracefully isn't easy. Especially in rock'n'roll. But here, Petty, in his early 40s, cast an unflinching eye at growing older, with all its self-doubt (*It's Good To Be King*), nostalgia (*Don't Fade On Me*) and creeping cynicism (*Hard On Me*), and turned it into lean, elegant poetry. In the same year that producer Rick Rubin revived Johnny Cash's career, he helped Petty find the elusive second act. *'Think of me what you will, I got a little space to fill,'* Petty sings on *You Don't Know How It Feels*. More than a little, and for always. **BDM**

What they said at the time: ***"Evidence that this American boy is moving through middle age with all the gusto and poise that his admirers have come to expect."*** Rolling Stone

RITUAL DE LO HABITUAL

JANE'S ADDICTION

Warner Bros, 1990

The LA band's follow-up to 1988's *Nothing's Shocking* was as far from hair-metal as you could get. And it wasn't, a year from *Nevermind*, proto-grunge, even if this double-platinum record did help soften up the mainstream for alternative rock. *Ritual De Lo Habitual* was baroque'n'roll, multi-layered and richly textured, a feast of overdubs, unorthodox quasi-tribal rhythms and instrumental intricacy, topped off by Perry Farrell's fever-pitch howl. Vinyl side one, from the frenetic *Stop* to the overdriven tumult of *Been Caught Stealing*, comprises synapse-snapping short songs. Side two is more progressive, the 10-minute *Three Days* and similarly sectional *Then She Did…* delivering skewed dynamics, and a blueprint for a new kind of rock that few have dared follow. **PL**

What they said at the time: ***"Enigmatic, audacious and unpredictable to the last."*** Q

GETTY

NO QUARTER: UNLEDDED

JIMMY PAGE AND ROBERT PLANT
Fontana, 1994

12

Following the two horribly undercooked Led Zeppelin reunions of the 80s, for the 90s vintage Jimmy Page and Robert Plant fell back into the arms of each other but neglected to invite along John Paul Jones. Using Plant's then solo band, and bolstered at different times by Moroccan street musicians, an Egyptian string ensemble and the London Metropolitan Orchestra, they made the boldest, most invigorating music either man had made in years.

With *Unledded*, Page and Plant tapped back into the questing spirit that in Zeppelin in 1972 had sent them off to India to play with the Bombay Symphony, roving from Marrakech to a slate quarry in Wales to a rousing live performance at the old LWT TV studios in London. On route, choice Zep cuts were recalibrated as exotic Middle Eastern drones, and a handful of newer compositions were tossed into the mix. Page played brilliantly, Plant sang like a souk-raiding Viking, and on a thrilling re-working of *Gallows Pole* they rolled the years back and forward with admirable purpose and ambition. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"When the playing stops, it feels as if an aerial bombardment has ended."*** *Rolling Stone*

TROUBLEGUM

THERAPY?
A&M, 1994

11

On 1992's *Nurse*, their major-label debut, the Larne trio had served notice that they were post-grunge noise makers to be reckoned with. Follow-up *Troublegum* fulfilled that promise and then some, marrying Nirvana's quiet-loud playbook with Metallica-sized riffs and the adrenalin rush of earlier Northern Irish trailblazers Stiff Little Fingers. In short, here was a record as in-your-face as it was impossibly exciting. Its singular mood was set by the opening one-two of *Knives* and *Screamager*. *'With a face like this I won't break any hearts… Screw that, forget about that,'* snarled satanic Teddy bear Andy Cairns on the latter. Nihilism has rarely sounded better. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"1994's first truly magnificent record."*** *Q*

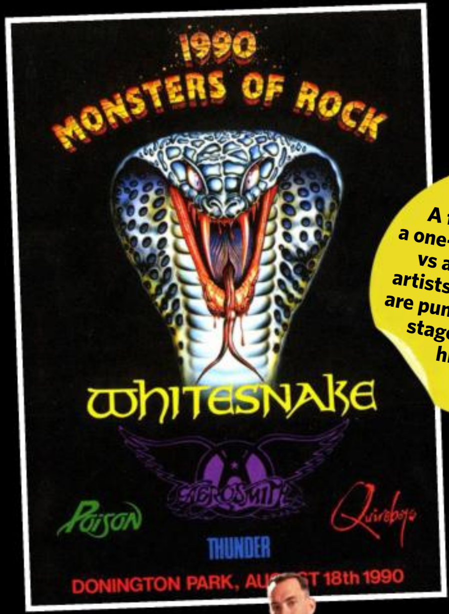
THEN vs NOW

Oh, how life has changed since the 1990s.

A mobile phone that could make calls and send text messages (and was the size of a brick), vs a mobile phone that runs your life and everything in it.

Father Ted **on a small CRT TV, vs** ***Game Of Thrones*** **in HD on a 60-inch flat-screen TV.**

Having proper old-skool fun at a gig, vs trying to see the stage through a wall of raised arms and mobile phones.



A five-band bill at a one-stage Donington, vs almost as many artists playing as there are punters, on multiple stages a half-hour hike apart.

Films with down-to-earth stories shot in real locations, vs futuristic films shot in a galaxy far, far away (or using CGI that makes them look like they are).

GETTY x5; FORREST GUMP + FATHER TED: ALAMY; BB8 + GOT: REX

Rip It Up And Start Again

Thunder guitarist Luke Morley looks back on the transformation of a bunch of has-beens into the first great British rock band of the 90s.

Words: **Dave Ling**

10 BACK STREET SYMPHONY

THUNDER

EMI, 1990

In the early 1990s, in that overlap between glam rock and grunge, you'd have got pretty long odds on a blues-based British rock band becoming 'the next big thing', especially one including former members of Terraplane. Which is why Thunder's debut album came as such a bolt from the blue. Cocky, charismatic and oozing class, it was the kind of thing that hadn't been heard since the glory days of the 70s. It also helped spark a new upturn in British hard rock.

Is it true that the seeds for Thunder were sewn by a fact-finding mission to New York and LA?
Yeah. Danny [Bowes, vocals] and I went there to meet a few people and see what was going on. Mötley Crüe and Guns N' Roses had just exploded. I'd written *Dirty Love* and *An Englishman On Holiday*, and coming back from that trip there was a sense of those songs fitting with something. We knew exactly what we were going to do. It happened to coincide with the British labels also having similar thoughts: "Okay, we need to find an English band that can compete with Guns N' Roses."

Seeing Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora jamming with Lita Ford at London's Marquee was another important moment.
When we got back from America, Terraplane was still going – just about. But we knew we had to rebuild, rename and start all over again. Lita was okay and it was a good gig, but when Jon and Richie got up the place went nuts. I thought: "We can do better than that c**t" [laughs] So we trotted over to the St Moritz nightclub and put together a plan. We were off.

How long did it take to write the album?
Once the overall vision was in place it didn't take long at all. And meeting Andy Taylor [the former Duran Duran guitarist, who produced the album] served to speed things up.

You've referred to Taylor as Thunder's "attitude manager".
Yeah. Coming out of Terraplane, confidence was pretty low. Taylor knew so much about production, that for the first time ever in a studio I felt able to completely trust someone. Taylor just told us to play louder, open another beer and relax.

There were some pretty riotous scenes during the recording at Great Linford Manor.
It was marvellous, and everything contributed to the vibe. We evicted a maintenance man from his basement office and called it Harry's Bar – I think that was [mixer] Mike Fraser's idea. We bought a couple of barrels from a local pub, and some optics, and we would toddle down there every night to listen to the rough mixes. And at the weekend we invited all our friends from London for a good old piss-up.

***Back Street Symphony* debuted at No.21 in the UK chart. Why do you think it connected the way it did?**
Timing had a lot to do with it. Thanks to Guns N' Roses and Bon Jovi in the previous decade, rock was starting to become fashionable again. If you look at our direct competition at the time, The Quireboys were a great band but far more traditional barroom rock'n'roll, The Almighty had more in common with Motörhead, Little Angels were probably the closest to us in a stylistic sense but they were a lot younger. Those seven or eight years we had on them made a great difference – experience can make you very focused. Oh, and the fact that it's a good album.

Why was it so good?
Andy Taylor takes a lot of the credit, and Mike Fraser was very much the unsung hero. We needed to sound big and noisy but not at the cost of the songs, and they achieved that perfectly.

What they said at the time: ***"Straight from the Bad Co. rule book we have a classic in the making on our hands. Buy this or be damned."*** *Kerrang!*

Twenty-seven years on, are there things you now don't like about it?
To be honest, no. EMI have rinsed the back catalogue since we left in 1995 and I've had much cause to revisit it. They sent us a load of rough mixes that I'd completely forgotten about. *Gimme Some Lovin'* [a cover of the Spencer Davis Group hit] is on the album because we were a song short, but there's also a very good version of [Elton John's] *Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting* that was very nearly included instead. But basically I have no regrets. It's full of energy, it's vibrant and exciting. It's a really good rock album and we still play most of its songs in our live set.

Talking of which, the shadow of *Back Street Symphony* looms large. Is it annoying that every Thunder album is now compared to it?
No, it's great that people still have a great affection for it. I still think we've done stuff that's as good or better, but of course it means a lot to people in terms of where they were when they first heard it. As a musician, you can ask for nothing more.

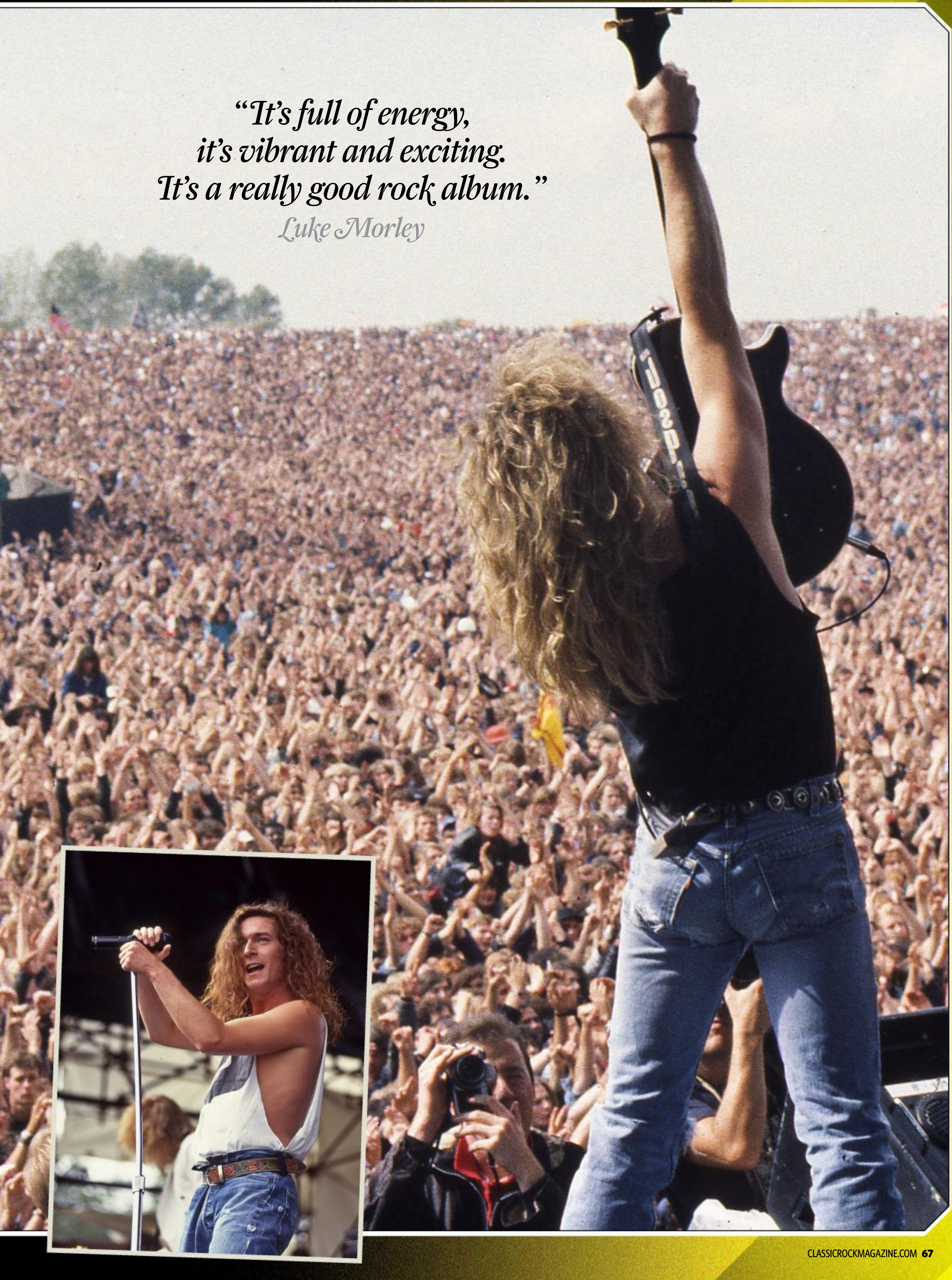
Thunder's live album Stage is out on Blu-ray, DVD and CD on March 23 via earMUSIC.

Luke Morley (main pic) and Danny Bowes during Thunder's killer show opening 1990's Monsters Of Rock festival.

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

"It's full of energy, it's vibrant and exciting. It's a really good rock album."

Luke Morley



Motörhead: their first album of the new decade was an absolute monster.

1916

MOTÖRHEAD

WTG/Epic, 1991

9

It's barely conceivable now, but Motörhead entered the 90s on a losing streak. Their most recent album, 1987's deathly dull *Rock'N'Roll*, was such a flop that Lemmy had upped sticks and scuttled off to live in Los Angeles.

The California sun clearly did him good. Motörhead's first album of the new decade was an absolute monster. Reckless, relentless opener *The One To Sing The Blues*, *R.A.M.O.N.E.S* (a tribute to the legendary NYC punk pioneers) and the stone-cold classic *No Voices In The Sky* reignited the band's fearsome engine after a few years of idling. But there were some unexpected diversions: the menacing *Nightmare/The Dreamtime* was Motörhead reimagined as a goth band, while *Love Me Forever* was their unique take on the power ballad. Most startling of all was the title track, a funereal spoken-word piece about a young World War I solider that was genuinely moving and utterly heartbreaking.

Like all the greatest Motörhead albums, *1916* could have been recorded at any point between the 50s and today. It stood defiant in the face of passing trends, and remained uncowed by the band's own glorious past.

They don't make 'em like this any more. But then they didn't at the time either. **DE**

What they said at the time: ***"Motörhead badly needed an album like this, but no one could have guessed they'd do it so convincingly."*** *Select*

BRAVE

MARILLION

EMI, 1994

8

With their first album of the 90s, *Holidays In Eden*, Marillion went in a much more commercial direction than previously, with snappier, catchier material, although the band's Fish-era grip on the singles chart was fading.

Typically, their label were looking for more of the same when it came to the next one. Marillion had other ideas. Inspired by a story singer Steve Hogarth had heard about a girl found wandering on the Severn Bridge with no memory and not talking, the band set about recording a concept album based on who she might have been. So instead of a swiftly recorded album full of radio-friendly tunes, their label got a concept album that took almost a year to make. The band's fan base loved the swirling, proggy atmospherics. EMI were less enamoured, and Marillion were off the label following their next album.

Brave was their last Top 10 album until 2016's *F.E.A.R.* **JE**

What they said at the time: ***"One of the best concept albums in prog history."*** *DPRP*

USE YOUR ILLUSION I & II

GUNS N' ROSES

Geffen, 1991

7

Nirvana might have challenged the world order in 1991, but Guns N' Roses were not going quietly. With 4.2 million units shipped, and record shops opening at midnight to service the long queues, the two *Illusion* albums represented the last stand for the more-is-more ethos of the 80s – and the music almost lived up to the occasion. Pubs groaned with debate over the merits of *I* (home to *Don't Cry*, *Bad Obsession* and the epic *November Rain*) and *II* (*Civil War*, *You Could Be Mine*, *Get In The Ring*'s hack-baiting punk sneer). Whether you were in the 'gold' or 'blue' camp, one thing was certain: these albums were a genuine rock'n'roll event, of the kind that would be unthinkable a decade later. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"Guns N' Roses fire on all comers and take no prisoners."*** *Rolling Stone*

DIRT

ALICE IN CHAINS

Columbia, 1992

6

Dirt is truly a remarkable album, transcending grunge and any other genre, a classic for the 90s. Intensely dark and disturbing, nonetheless it is also oddly uplifting. The band were brave and agitated enough to lay bare their deepest emotions, and much of what they wrote about concerned the implications of their drug problems.

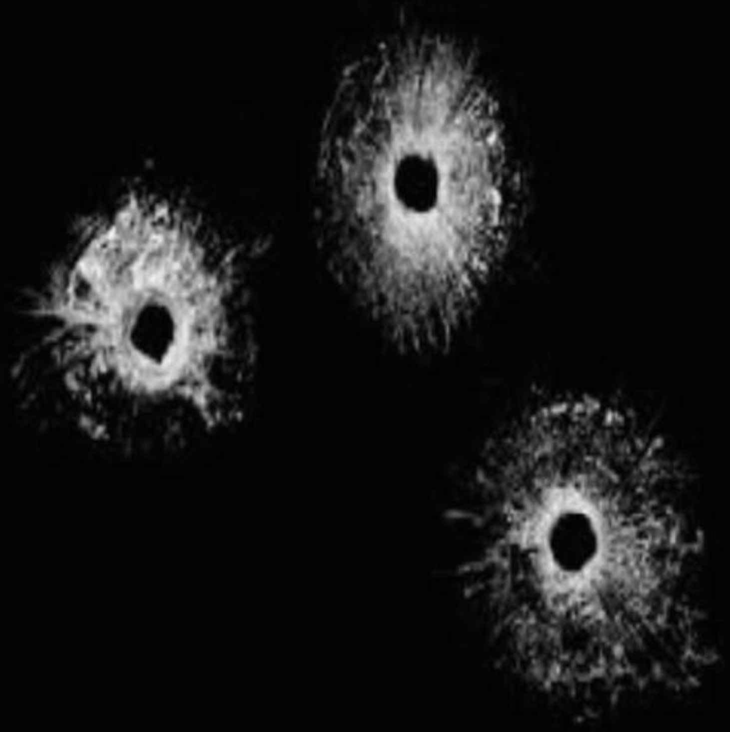
Vocalist Layne Staley and guitarist Jerry Cantrell have a raw rapport that elevates songs like *Down In A Hole*, *Would?* and *Angry Chair* to rarefied heights. The musicianship is stark, sparse yet symphonic, and Dave Jerden's sympathetic production gives the band space to resonate and expand their artistry.

Dirt is arguably Alice In Chains' finest release. More than that, it's an album that helped to shape and define the decade. And it stands comparison with any of the great records of the 70s and 80s. **MD**

What they said at the time: ***"A fiercely rocking testimonial to human endurance."*** *Kerrang!*

ANNAMARIA DISANTO/ICONICPIX

THE W!LDE



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HITZ RECORDS

Greetings From S#✲tsville!

It was 1993. Grunge was running rampant across the world, but in the UK a bunch of dysfunctional no-hopers were staging a one-band fightback. This is how **The Wildhearts** made their masterpiece debut...

Words: **Paul Rees**

5 EARTH vs THE WILDHEARTS

THE WILDHEARTS

EastWest 1993

In the summer of 1993 the prevailing sound was of down-tuned guitars and recycled Black Sabbath riffs. Alienation and ennui were lyrical staples and plaid shirts and Doc Martens de rigueur as uniform. Two years after Nirvana released *Nevermind*, grunge was at its all-pervasive zenith and American alt.rock in the ascendancy. Already that year, Smashing Pumpkins and Tool had each brought out their second album, respectively *Siamese Dream* and *Undertow*. The biggest guns were looming, too. Nirvana's *In Utero* was being readied for a September release, Pearl Jam's *Vs* a month later. Three weeks ahead of *In Utero*, another now-classic album was released. And from an unlikely source.

The Wildhearts had evolved out of such inglorious other bands as the Quireboys, Dogs D'Amour, Tattooed Love Boys and hardly recalled NWOBHM-ers Tobruk. Forming as Wild Hearts, they at first comported themselves as faintly ridiculous Guns N'Roses clones with their teased hair and cowboy boots. Such was the chaotic nature of almost everything they did, it took them four years to get around to making their first album. Even then, *Earth Vs The Wildhearts* was spewed out on to tape that was so worn it was almost transparent, and with the four members of the band in a state guitarist CJ now describes succinctly as "fucked".

What they said at the time:
"Alongside Rage Against The Machine's debut, it could just be the most important rock yardstick of the year." *Kerrang!*

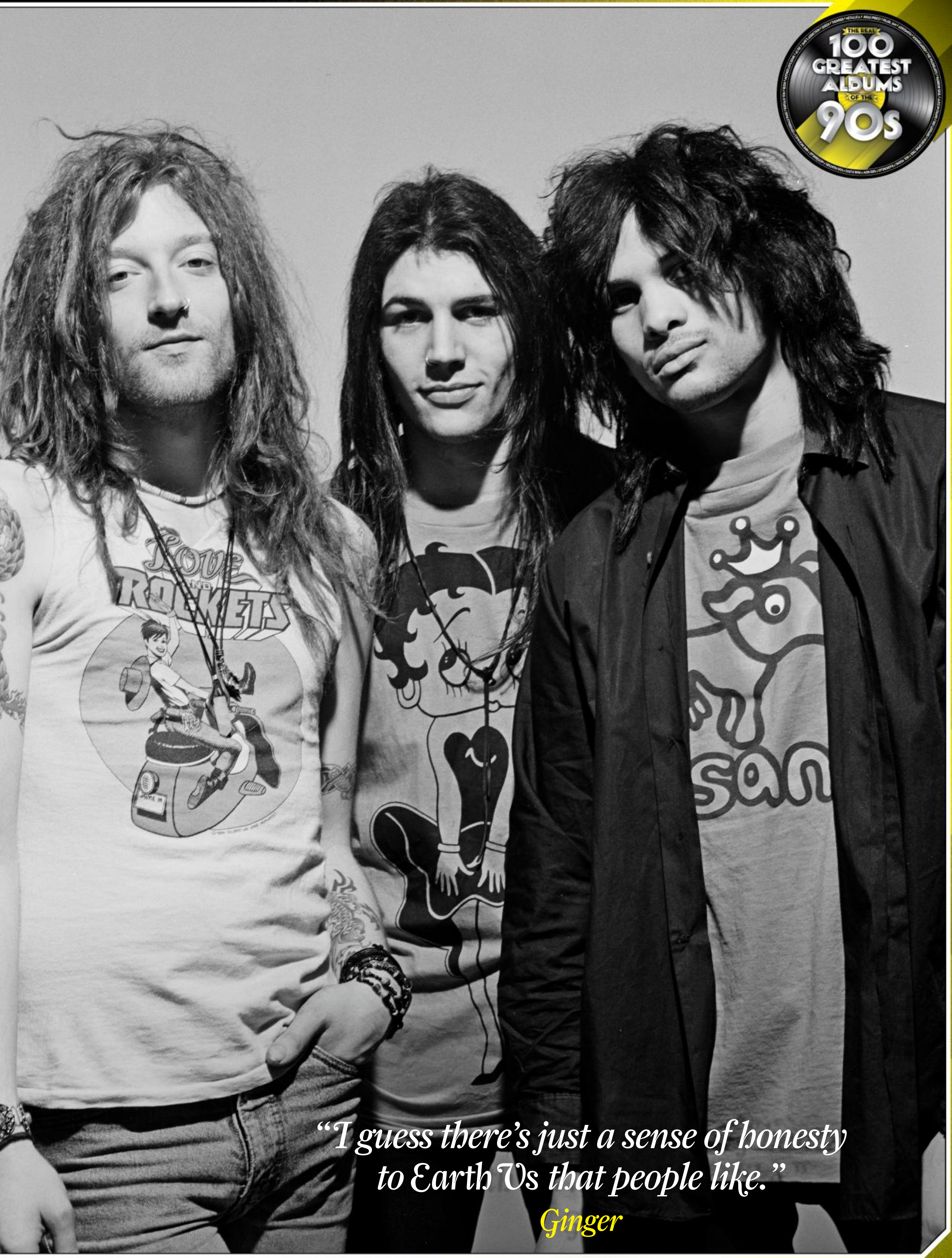
Yet the result sounded not only entirely at odds with the musical mood of the time, but also almost stupidly exciting. All at once, *Earth Vs The Wildhearts* shot a restorative cocktail into the veins of a then-moribund British rock scene, made the idea of grafting bittersweet harmonies on to Metallica riffs seem entirely cogent, and marked the flowering of a rare and genuine maverick talent in the misbegotten form of singer/songwriter/guitarist Ginger. The Wildhearts were to prove incapable of sustaining any semblance of *Earth Vs* dead-ahead focus, but nonetheless the sheer potency of the record has been amplified over time.

"That was the first album I ever recorded, and for whatever reason it's the one I'm still talking about to this day," Ginger, 53 now, reflects. "I guess there's just a sense of honesty to *Earth Vs* that people like. We weren't trying to be glamorous, and it must have worked for us.

"I haven't listened to it for twenty years. People are very, very fond of it and for ▷

The men who fell to *Earth*: (l-r) Stidi, Ginger, Danny McCormack and CJ, 1993.

CAMERA PRESS/ STEVE DOUBLE



"I guess there's just a sense of honesty to Earth Vs that people like."

Ginger

"Okay, whose turn is it to tidy up?" CJ, Ginger, Danny and Bam, 1992.

that I'm grateful, but I've no real connection with those songs now. As a whole it's like a snapshot of your first shag. When the reviews came out and it was: 'The sound of British rock finally waking up,' we were like: 'Are these fuckers talking about our album?' It didn't make sense then and it still doesn't now."

At the dawn of 1989, no success of any kind seemed within reach of the man born David Walls in South Shields, Tyneside. Ginger, as he would become known, had just then been thrown out of the Quireboys for being too heavy a guitar player and an even heavier drinker and general party animal. During the brief time he was in the Quireboys he had given no indication that he could write songs, much less that he was able to bring together such disparate styles as thrash metal, glam rock, punk rock and alt. country. Not that to begin with he even knew how to translate this gumbo of influences into real flesh-and-blood sound.

Wild Hearts started off by hitching on to the last knockings of the hair-metal bandwagon. A couple of early line-ups included one of two vocalists – former Tobruk frontman Stuart 'Snake' Neale and one Dunken F Mullet from another band of also-rans, Mournblade. The fledgling group recording a grand total of nine demo tapes with this pair, which combined did at least land them a development deal with EastWest Records, but no distinction. After Ginger was eventually persuaded to take on lead vocals, they settled on a line-up comprised of founders Ginger and guitarist CJ, late of the Tattooed Love Boys, plus former Dogs D'Amour drummer Bam, and on bass Danny McCormack.

It was Ginger becoming their lead singer, abetted by the discovery that CJ was naturally inclined towards vocal harmonies and, what's more, that their two voices fitted like the proverbial hand in glove, that gave the now Wildhearts their wings.

"Up to that point we'd wanted a cross between Joe Strummer, Robin Zander, Steven Tyler and Paul Stanley," a laughing CJ recalls of their vocalist search. "Of course, that person doesn't exist. And now all of a sudden we had these really lovely Beatles, Beach Boys-style harmonies."

"I hated singing," adds Ginger. "I'm only comfortable now when I sing in a Geordie accent. Over the years, I've wished that I'd held out and found a proper singer, but I doubt we'd be having this conversation now if that'd happened."

In the two years that followed after he stepped up to the mic, songs flowed out from Ginger and on to an EP, *Mondo Akimbo A-Go-Go*, and a mini-album, *Don't Be Happy… Just Worry*. Bam jumped back into Dogs D'Amour, Andrew 'Stidi' Stidolph took over the drum stool, and from touring with everyone from Diamond Head to Alice in Chains and the Manics The Wildhearts' sound hardened and crystallised.

"All along I was kind of cherry-picking the songs I liked best for the first album, because that's what bands used to do when I was young," says Ginger. "I wanted it to have the best chance possible of being accepted. But right up until it got released I figured there was a strong chance people would just turn around and go: 'No, you can't do that.' That mixing heavy with pop wouldn't work, because otherwise someone else would have already done it.

"It was going totally against the grain. Which for me was the more reason to do it. Plus I had the confidence of youth. I hated grunge, couldn't understand why anyone would like it. The music I was listening to was played by the sort of people you would want to invite to a party. This was years before any of us had even tried heroin. We were all about speed, which was just as well because it was all we could afford. I always thought heroin was the least rock-and-roll drug in the world, because it put people to sleep."

Charged with shepherding that first album into being was Dante Bonutto, recently added to the A&R department at EastWest. A former rock writer, Bonutto had seen Ginger out and about at gigs and they shared a passion for Kiss, but it wasn't until the sessions for *Don't Be Happy* that they were formally introduced. Or to be more accurate, this was occasioned as Bonutto watched Ginger drive a tractor into the recording studio's swimming pool.

"I stood there thinking: 'He's not going into the pool, surely?' And he did," Bonutto remembers. "That sort of set the tone for our relationship from then on. There was always a drama going on."

"How brattish and belligerent the band were put people off as much as it attracted them," CJ qualifies. "It wasn't an act. The Wildhearts was dysfunctional as a group and as individuals. We just weren't very nice people."

> *"The Wildhearts was dysfunctional as a group and as individuals. We weren't very nice people."*
> CJ

In early 1993, EastWest put the Wildhearts into Wessex studios in north London for an intended short, sharp demo session. Wessex was where the Sex Pistols had put down *Never Mind The Bollocks* and the Clash *London Calling*. There was no fanfare or import attending the Wildhearts' date. Working with the in-house engineer, they had to use so-called 'gash tape', a cheap quarter-inch reel onto which countless other wannabes had previously recorded tracks. The budget was so restrictive that Bonutto practically had to beg his paymasters for a hand-out so that the band could finish up an additional song, *Loveshit*, that Ginger knocked out at the last minute.

His motivation for *Loveshit* was unconventional. One day, he reminisced with Bonutto about a TV advert of the 1980s for the body spray Limara. The ad was popular among teenage boys of the time for showing a pneumatic blonde bathing naked in a waterfall. Ginger's specific point of interest was the ad's theme song, *Remember My Name*, a strident rocker that Bonutto informed him was sung, in a full-throated roar, by Stevie Lange, then-wife of producer 'Mutt' Lange. And soon enough, Stevie was brought to Wessex to sing backing vocals on Ginger's newest song.

"My puberty loved that advert and her voice," Ginger says. "I can remember running away and writing that song just for Stevie to sing. I didn't want her to have

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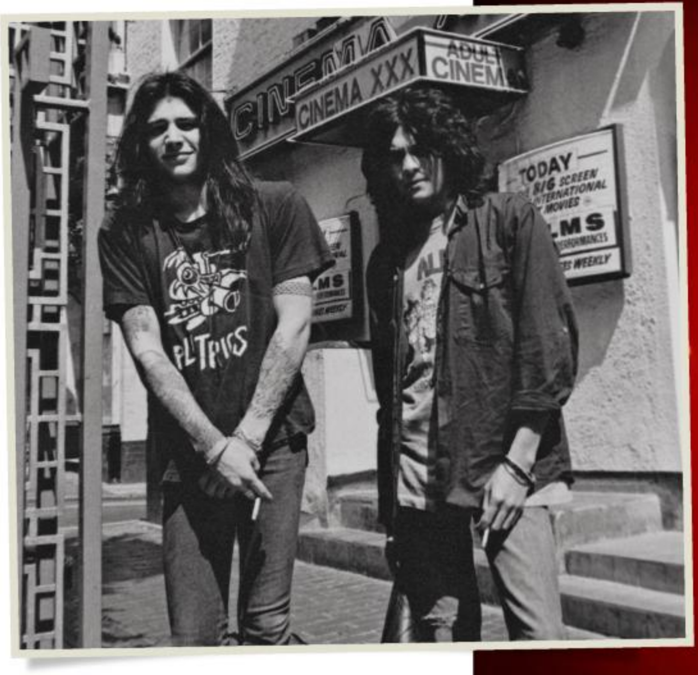

to sing any of the others that had all these swear words, but I called it *Loveshit* by accident. Not the smartest bolt in the box."

Like the other 10 songs that would make up the Wildhearts' debut album, *Loveshit* was recorded live in one or two takes. Most of the rest were drawn from more direct personal experience: Ginger wrote *Miles Away Girl* about his girlfriend of the time, a nurse, and *Greetings From Shitsville* about his flat in London's Belsize Park. Although he wasn't above indulging in a spot of self-mythology on the latter; as CJ recalls: "NW3 is one of the richest postcodes in the world and Ginger's place was actually alright."

Musically, the tracks were like fun-fair rides, a roller-coaster cascade of ideas and reference points, veering off at wild tangents and as if none could be made epic enough to contain all the ideas rampaging around in Ginger's head. *Everlone*, for example, ran to six and a half minutes, accommodated at least four different, mighty riffs, and still gave the impression it could go for many minutes more.

"I just wanted to make a kind of music that I wasn't hearing at the time," says Ginger. "And I had nothing to write about other than what was going on in my life. That's been my practice ever since. It means that whenever I go on stage, no matter how I'm feeling, at least I'm not a fraud."

"I still think today that Ginger is hugely underrated," offers Bonutto. "I would put him up alongside Elvis Costello and Paul Weller as one of our great British songwriters, and he's probably been more consistent than either of them. I've never heard a bad song he's written."

A kind of reckless abandon was another of Ginger's signature traits. It was this that surely led him to title three of *Earth Vs'* most accessible songs: *Greetings From Shitsville*, *Loveshit* and *My Baby Is A Headfuck*. Bonutto had the often onerous task of explaining away this self-destructive bent to his bosses at EastWest. Today he considers The Wildhearts the very last band that should have been signed to a major record company.

"That whole corporate set-up was anathema to Ginger as an artist and he didn't want to toe the line," he says. "If I said something was black, he would automatically go white because he felt it was the right thing to do artistically. I actually had great empathy with his point of view, because I love that rebellious rock'n'roll spirit and people who live the lifestyle and mean it.

"I played *Greetings From Shitsville* to the head of A&R at the company and he said: 'That's an amazing song. Why on earth would they call it *Shitsville*?' Well, welcome to The Wildhearts."

"Thing is, we never had any aspirations towards commercial success," reasons Ginger. "We didn't have those smarts about sustaining a career. Swear words are fantastic, too, if you're trying to be loud and snotty. That was our logic."

Right from the outset, the band had wanted to have Mick Ronson produce their debut album. They had been impressed by the venerable former Spiders From Mars guitarist's work with Morrissey on the latter's 1992 album *Your Arsenal*. But Ronson's health was ailing and he was unable to commit to such a labour. However, he did drive himself down to the studio to add a characteristic solo to *My Baby Is A Headfuck*, an event that CJ recalls "kind of freaked us out". It would be the last time Ronson was recorded, cancer claiming him on April 29, 1993.

Above left: Danny and CJ on the town; right: Ginger lets fly.

GETTY x2

'Earth Vs shot a restorative cocktail into the veins of a then-moribund British rock scene.'

After that, they turned to producer Mark Dodson re-recording with him a brace of the demo tracks. One, *Suckerpunch*, made it onto the finished album. The other, …*Headfuck*, didn't because the band had needed to match exactly the tempo of the original in order for Ronson's contribution to be preserved, and the result was stilted.

Neither Ginger nor Bonutto can quite agree on whose actual idea it was, but both men finally determined that the demos should be released as the finished album, with the exception of *Suckerpunch*. Bonutto's one concession to radio-friendliness was to have the basic tracks remixed by Pet Shop Boys/Human League producer Mike 'Spike' Drake. By Bonutto's own admission, the band immediately took against Drake, but he succeeded in accentuating the sugar pill of Ginger's melodies without dampening the Wildhearts' raw fire. ▷

Don't be happy, just look worried: Danny, Rich Battersby, Ginger and CJ, circa 1994.

Earth Vs The Wildhearts was released on August 30, 1993, by which time Stidi had been replaced on drums by Rich Battersby. The album's front cover adequately reflected the distinctive, uncompromising nature of the music: a portrait of Ginger, his face submerged in oil and bound with barbed wire, a cockroach crawling from his mouth. This, Bonutto points out, was in the days before Photoshop technology, "so for real he had to lie in a bath of oil with a cockroach on his face. Altogether it was a magnificent statement."

Another Wildhearts sleeve from that period was to gain a notoriety of its own. EastWest pressed ahead with *Shitsville* as the launch single. Ginger had a very particular idea for the artwork that should accompany it. Which is to say he imagined a photograph of someone shitting into a pitta bread that the four members of the band would hold open. At the time, they were laying down their first batch of tracks with Battersby, and Simon Efemey producing. Ginger happened to mention the pitta bread idea to the voluble Efemey, who instantly volunteered his services.

"A week later, the five of us were in a photo studio and me with my kecks off," Efemey recalls. "A Japanese girl took the picture, and it was all set up with deadly seriousness. The night before, I'd even drunk a load of Guinness to help ease my movement. But as soon as I heard the camera shutter going I started to piss myself laughing. She got the shot of it appearing to drop into the pitta, but I was shaking so much that I actually shat all over Danny's hand."

This was a transgression too far for EastWest, who released the single in a plain brown sleeve instead.

The Wildhearts had got real momentum by then anyway. *Earth Vs The Wildhearts* received rave reviews, Radio 1 daytime playlisted another of the album's standout tracks, *TV Tan*, and the band undertook a crowning UK tour with The Almighty. By the next summer, the *Caffeine Bomb* single had got The Wildhearts on *Top Of The Pops* and they headlined the second stage at the Donington Monsters Of Rock festival on a bill that also included Therapy? and Terrorvision, heirs apparent to lead a Brit-rock renaissance. Ginger certainly had grand ambitions for The Wildhearts' next move, plotting a defining double album.

It wasn't to be. EastWest baulked at that concept too, and when the band's second album, *P.H.U.Q.* subsequently came out in May 1995 it was as a single disc. In Ginger's opinion it was a substandard one at that, the more ranging and esoteric tracks having been put out on the *Fishing For Luckies* EP instead.

P.H.U.Q. entered the UK chart at No.6 but, fatally, Ginger had ousted CJ from the band before it was even finished, robbing both himself and the Wildhearts of their essential foil. His timing couldn't have been more ruinous, and after that it was all downhill.

Intent on waging war with EastWest, Ginger next delivered them a third album of splenetic industrial metal, *Endless, Nameless*, that, depending on one's point of view, was either a bold artistic statement or unlistenable. EastWest duly passed on it. It was eventually released by indie label Mushroom Records in 1997, but by then Ginger had split the band, citing musical differences and drug problems.

"Two things derailed the band completely," Ginger offers. "The first was cocaine. That was how CJ and I fell out. Soon as cocaine came into the picture, the egos started to get affected and we were having these huge arguments about what I can't even remember. And when EastWest refused to go with the double album, the band was over for me at that point. If we were going to succeed at this I had wanted to make a statement."

> *"If you're going to be stupid, then do it when you're young. And we were stupider than most."*
>
> Ginger

The Wildhearts' story ever since has been typically chequered. Starting in 2001 there have been serial reunions, just as many bust-ups and the odd album. Last month, Ginger and CJ, the latter now living in the Yorkshire Dales, together played a handful of acoustic dates around the UK. The upshot of which, reasons CJ, was as likely to have been that they "wound up killing each other as to have come back feeling like brothers again".

Rich Battersby got to be so disillusioned with the whole messy business that at one point he stopped playing altogether, but he's now back in the fold. So too is Danny McCormack. Years of heroin addiction led in 2015 to him having to have his right leg amputated below the knee. "For a one-legged bloke that should be dead, he's doing really well," says Ginger. "I've no idea what makes that bloke tick, but tick he does."

Ginger too has not been without his demons. He was hospitalised last year in an apparent suicidal state. Today he claims to be fit, well and happier for being busy. Despite stating in the recent past that he would never again record with The Wildhearts, the band's eighth studio album is now on the cards, and they will join Reef and Terrorvision for the Britrock Must Be Destroyed tour in May.

Earth Vs The Wildhearts stands now as a monument to its time, to the pig-headed brilliance of the man who conceived it, and to The Wildhearts themselves, who, as spectacularly and wilfully as any band, snatched defeat from the jaws of certain victory.

"I really wouldn't want to go back and change anything," Ginger concludes. "Back then we were having the time of our lives. I would suggest to any band going in to make their first album that they live exactly as they want to and get smart later on. If you're going to be stupid, then for fuck's sake do it when you're young. And we were stupider than most."

Ginger's album Ghost In The Tanglewood is out on March 2 via Graphite.

PHOTOSHOT

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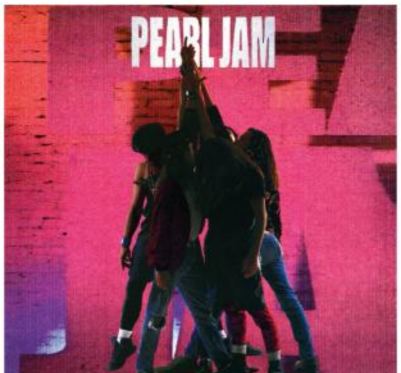
This One Goes Up To Ten

In 1992, *CR*'s Paul Elliott hung out with **Pearl Jam** when they were on the cusp of superstardom, their lives having changed immeasurably after a debut album that struck a chord with a generation.

Pearl Jam's debut album, *Ten,* was the sleeper hit of the grunge explosion. Predating Nirvana's *Nevermind* by a month, it took a while to find its feet. But when it did it turned Pearl Jam into the one of the biggest bands of the 1990s. The reasons behind their success weren't difficult to work out: a sound that skewed closer to classic rock than many of their punk rock-inclined peers did, and in singer Eddie Vedder they had a magnetic, if conflicted, figurehead.

I met the band in June '92 in London, when they were on the cusp of major stardom. They were in town to play a gig with The Cult in Finsbury Park and shoot a video for the song *Jeremy*. It was there that Vedder and guitarists Stone Gossard and Mike McCready spoke about the nascent Seattle scene, Gossard and bassist Jeff Ament's previous band Mother Love Bone, and Vedder's refusal to take on the role of spokesman for a new generation.

4
TEN
PEARL JAM
Epic, 1991



How soon after the break-up of Mother Love Bone did Pearl Jam come together?
Stone Gossard: It was only three months after [MLB frontman] Andy Wood's death that we made some demos. It was a really quick process.

Eddie is very different to how Andrew Wood was as a singer and as a personality. Eddie's more intense, less flamboyant.
SG: Oh yeah. Andy was constantly putting on a show, a very amusing guy. If he could have been anybody, he would have loved to be Freddie Mercury. But for Pearl Jam I wanted a singer as much the opposite of Andy as I could find.

Was it luck or fate that after losing Andy you found Eddie?
SG: Well, people think you only get one shot at finding a great singer. But fuck that. I don't buy that theory.

There are two albums that now stand as memorials to Andy. The first is Mother Love Bone's *Apple*.
SG: I think Andy was misunderstood, in the same way that Mother Love Bone has been totally glamourised. Everybody probably thinks we were a better live band than we actually were. But Andy was absolutely one of my favourite lyricists of all time.

And the Temple Of The Dog album was created while you were writing the first Pearl Jam songs.
SG: We'd practice with Eddie on Pearl Jam demos, then with Chris [Cornell] and Matt [Cameron] on the Temple Of The Dog thing, then with Eddie again.

What they said at the time: *"Pearl Jam hurtles into the mystic at warp speed. They wring a lot of drama out of a few declarative power chords swimming in echo."*
Rolling Stone

Sounds confusing.
SG: It was inspiring as hell!

Do other bands on the Seattle scene have that closeness that you have with Soundgarden?
SG: We totally get along with Soundgarden and Alice In Chains, they're friends of ours, so you could call that a scene. But those bands that are now relocating to Seattle are fooling themselves. In the long run it will be a knock against them, because people are already thinking how many good bands can come from one place.

What else has changed since the key Seattle bands became famous?
SG: Seattle was once an undeveloped area as far as the music business goes. There was a healthy punk scene, with people playing just for fun, and everything could develop at a slow pace. There wasn't a rush to get signed. Soundgarden and Mudhoney became great bands because they had a chance to develop naturally. They weren't thinking about major tours. They just wanted to put a record out on this little label called SubPop, because that would be the coolest thing that could happen. Now, priorities have changed.

Have you spent much time in Seattle since *Ten* was released?
SG: No. We've been on the road a long time, every day a new city. You know *Wanted Dead Or Alive*? That's us!

You've seen a million faces? And rocked them all?
Mike McCready: We've probably only seen about 250,000 faces, and maybe rocked about a third of those. Actually, Jon Bon Jovi and Richie Sambora were going to come to our show in Vancouver. We talked to the promoter and she said: "Be careful, they'll just drink all the beer in your dressing room while you're on stage!" But they never showed up. So we had the beer.

What do you do when you're at home?
SG: Last time I was in Seattle I went to a seventies rock club called Rock Candy and I heard those old Journey songs *Anyway You Want It* and *Feeling That Way*. They're such classic radio hits. We tried playing them for a laugh, but those songs are pretty difficult to play. We don't do them very well. When Eddie tries to sing in Steve Perry's register it's sort of strange.

Is that the kind of music you were raised on?
MM: I started playing guitar because of Kiss. I was eleven. They were the biggest band in the world. ▷

Pearl Jam in 1992: (l-r) Stone Gossard, Eddie Vedder (on wall), Dave Abbruzzese, Jeff Ament, Mike McCready.

"Soundgarden and Alice In Chains are friends of ours, so you could call that a scene."

Stone Gossard

CREDIT: JOE GIRON/ATLASICONS.COM

SG: I didn't discover Kiss until the other guys in my band started listening to them again in eighty-three. When I was a kid I was out of touch. I had hippie friends, we were into Led Zeppelin.

Where do you want to take Pearl Jam's music from here?
MM: I'm so excited about the next album. I'm a little tired of *Ten*. I like it, but we're more of a band now, we have more ideas and we play off each other a lot better.
SG: We want to mix it up as much as we can with the next record, do things we've never done before. We want it to be drier and grittier. I like the way the Black Crowes' album (*The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion*) is dry, just using the dynamics of the instruments.
Eddie Vedder: In the mood I'm in right now, I'm definitely going to say 'fuck' more than a few times on the next record. I got a song that goes: *'Drop the leash, drop the leash, get out of my fuckin' face!'* That's the chorus.

> *"An American magazine was getting letters: 'Eddie Vedder for President!' That's scary."*
> *Eddie Vedder*

Above: Eddie Vedder and Pearl Jam (Jeff Ament, Eddie Vedder, Stone Gossard) playing at Finsbury Park, London, June '92.

Why so angry, Eddie?
EV: It's bullshit what's happening in America. In Seattle, Washington – home to the controversial Seattle rock scene – with bands like the Dwarves and Tad and their interesting lyrics and artwork. They just passed a law, Bill 2556, saying you have to be eighteen to buy certain records. There's going to be little kids standing outside stores asking adults to buy these records for them. The censors don't listen to or understand this music, and with this bill they won't even allow a proper display of the records in the stores, so it won't sell so well, and the band might not even get to make another record. That's how it's going to change art. And we have to stand up against that. Bring any censorship argument to me and I'll fight it to the death.

Your lyrics in the song *Jeremy* address a controversial subject.
EV: It's a good story. A kid blew his brains out in front of his English class. That probably happens once a week in America. It's a by-product of America's fascination, or rather perversion, with guns.
SG: Parental neglect and abuse is the source of many problems that the earth has today. Childhood is the critical time of a person's development. Many of the things that happen to you as a child resurface, they can hold you back in life. Some of the inspiration for *Jeremy* came from a Texan newspaper article, but you can tell that some of the elements are out of Eddie's own experience.

Can you elaborate?
EV: As a writer, you don't just think about yourself. I observe a lot of what goes on around me. I always have since I was a toddler. I even tried to write songs back then. I was a pretty weird kid, I guess. Probably because there was other shit going on in the house that I didn't want to deal with, I'd lock myself in the bathroom. This was a form of escape. But if I mention personal things in a song, it's not escaping any more, it's a way of a dealing with some of that stuff.

Is there anything you consider too personal to put into a song?
EV: There are a lot of things I feel strongly about, and I'll probably go public about some of them. I haven't said anything publicly about pornography, although I feel it's demeaning to women. I don't think you can argue with that. Five years ago, in tiny bands, I was organising little benefit shows, making little strides. I haven't changed because there's

GETTY x2

a microphone in front of my face. I don't want to be any big spokesperson.

Do you think that's what people want from you?
EV: An American magazine was getting letters: 'Eddie Vedder for President!' That's scary. I'm just a guy with honest opinions.

What are your thoughts on religion?
EV: Most religions don't seem real. I never really trusted them. It sounds righteous saying this, but whether I know religion or not, this music comes from an honest place in me, and when you play for people and they sing along, when that reaction happens, that feels religious right there.

You talked about your need for a form of escape in your childhood. Is escape what surfing gives you as an adult?
EV: When you surf alone, you get some thinking done. People think of sun and sand and girls, but surfing for me is not really like that. At eight in the morning it's foggy and cold; you drag yourself into the ocean and you can't even see the waves through the fog. It's not very glamorous, but those are the best waves. The still water is like glass – you feel like you're breaking the plane for the first time as you're paddling out. So it's a good time to think.

It brings you peace?
EV: Not exactly. But time alone is when you really connect with yourself. Some people connect with others. That's how their philosophies work. But I'm still trying to get in touch with myself. I've held my breath and swum as deep as I could down into myself, and then had to come up for air, or because the pressure got too intense my head felt like it was imploding. But I know I can go deeper. It's just a matter of holding my breath longer.

Pearl Jam play UK dates beginning on June 18.

THE SOUTHERN HARMONY AND MUSICAL COMPANION

THE BLACK CROWES
Def American, 1992

In 1992, while the metropolises of North America drove the alt.rock revolution, it was a baffling anomaly to see the US chart topped by a pair of combative Georgia brothers whose cultural clock had apparently stopped in the mid-70s ("There's no new music, ever, period," shrugged guitarist Rich Robinson, in what might have been the Black Crowes' credo).

All bell-bottoms, weed, open tunings and white-blues hollers, the Crowes were gloriously at sea among the class of 1992. Perhaps that's why *The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion* thrived; this was the album that kept a schizophrenic decade anchored to the past masters, channelling the Rolling Stones, the Faces and the Allman Brothers, among other set-texts and usual suspects.

It didn't hurt, either, that it turned in a fistful of the band's greatest tunes. *Remedy* was a hard-riffing roadhouse classic, *Sting Me* paired louche guitars with call-and-response gospel vocals, while *Hotel Illness* was the pick, a harp-wheezing barnstormer so good that you half-expected to see 'Jagger/Richards' credited in the brackets.

The Robinsons would lose their purpose as the decade progressed, but in 1992 they were damn-near perfect. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"They have a frisky, straight-ahead rock & roll positivism that runs so contrary to nearly everything else in the present."*** Entertainment Weekly

SUPERUNKNOWN

SOUNDGARDEN
A&M, 1994

In the time between Soundgarden's third album, 1991's *Badmotorfinger*, and fourth, 1994's *Superunknown*, the landscape of mainstream music in America changed almost beyond recognition. With the pivotal breakout success of Nirvana's *Nevermind*, released the same day as *Badmotorfinger*, at a stroke an entire generation of until-then cult-happy alt. rock bands became major-league contenders. Whereas their fellow Seattle vets Mudhoney and others such as Sonic Youth kept right on ploughing their own particular furrows, Soundgarden stepped up to the plate.

On *Badmotorfinger*, Chris Cornell, Kim Thayil, Ben Shepherd and Matt Cameron had taken their Sabbath-meets-Zeppelin grind and grunge to extremes. Three years on, and over the epic 15-song, 75-minute span of *Superunknown* they expanded their horizons dramatically, and also their reach. Beatles and Beach Boys flourishes and psychedelic colourings and inflections poured over Thayil's juddering guitar riffs and Cornell's primal howl to especially devastating effect on *The Day I Tried To Live* and *Black Hole Sun*. *Kickstand* roared, *Limo Wreck* hulked, both doing so magnificently, stridently. And with hindsight the wounded fragility unveiled on *Like Suicide* now sounds sharply poignant.

Altogether, *Superunknown* was Soundgarden's masterpiece and one of the select few true classics of the era. **PR**

What they said at the time: ***"Like Black Sabbath's* Paranoid, *Led Zeppelin's* Physical Graffiti *and Van Halen's* 1984, *a hard-rock milestone."*** Entertainment Weekly

The Black Crowes: in 1992 they were damn-near perfect.

THE BLACK CROWES: NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM

1 METALLICA
METALLICA
Vertigo, 1991

Metallica were always a step ahead of the game. As far back as their second album, 1984's *Ride The Lightning*, they were already dispensing with the trappings of thrash metal, the genre they created. Where Metallica led, everyone else followed.

By the start of the 1990s, they had recognised that the epic sprawl they had perfected was unsustainable, while drummer Lars Ulrich's finely tuned cultural antennae had clocked that a change was in the air. Their response was a stroke of genius: strip away all the fat, without losing the things that made Metallica so unique. With producer Bob Rock (whose previous credits included The Cult's *Sonic Temple* and Mötley Crüe's *Dr. Feelgood*), brought in as producer – a controversial move at the time, but in retrospect an inspired one – they delivered an album that redefined rock and metal for the coming decade.

The album's opening track and first single, the eternal *Enter Sandman*, was also the first track they wrote for the record, and it set the template for what was to follow. *Metallica* (aka the Black Album) was Metallica recallibrated as a stadium-metal powerhouse, one that could switch from the monolothic heaviness of *Sad But True* or *Through The Never* to Spaghetti Western-influenced *The Unforgiven* or the stark balladary of *Nothing Else Matters*. There were nods to the past, not least on the thrash-paced *Holier Than Thou*, but the album was a new Metallica for a new decade.

Upon release its impact was instant, and the aftershocks resonated throughout the rest of the decade and beyond. Suddenly metal was something it had never been before: credible in the eyes of the mainstream.

Of course, some long-time Metallica fans were unhappy with the record, but the number who defected was far outweighed by the number of new fans who came on board – at the last count, the Black Album had sold more than 16 million copies in the US alone. But it wasn't just about commercial success, it was also about opening up a whole new chapter in music. No one else has even come close since. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"Metallica manage to rekindle the kind of intensity that fired the likes of Black Sabbath before metal fell in love with its own clichés."*** Q

Riots! Torture! Gay Porn!

20 Things You Didn't Know About Metallica's Black Album.

Words: **Henry Yates**

#1. THE BAND WERE READY TO GET RID OF BOB ROCK
Between his poodle-rock CV and his early pronouncement that Metallica's records didn't match their shows (Ulrich: "We're like: 'Excuse me, who the fuck are you?'"), the band were wary of their new producer – and kept former collaborator Flemming Rasmussen on standby.

#2. *ENTER SANDMAN* WAS ORIGINALLY ABOUT DEAD BABIES
Late in the sessions, Hetfield drafted a lyric based on the premise of "baby suddenly dies, the sandman killed it" (with the line *'Disrupt the perfect family'* where the familiar *'Off to never-never land'* is now). But with management eyeing *Enter Sandman* as the lead single, Rock had a quiet word…

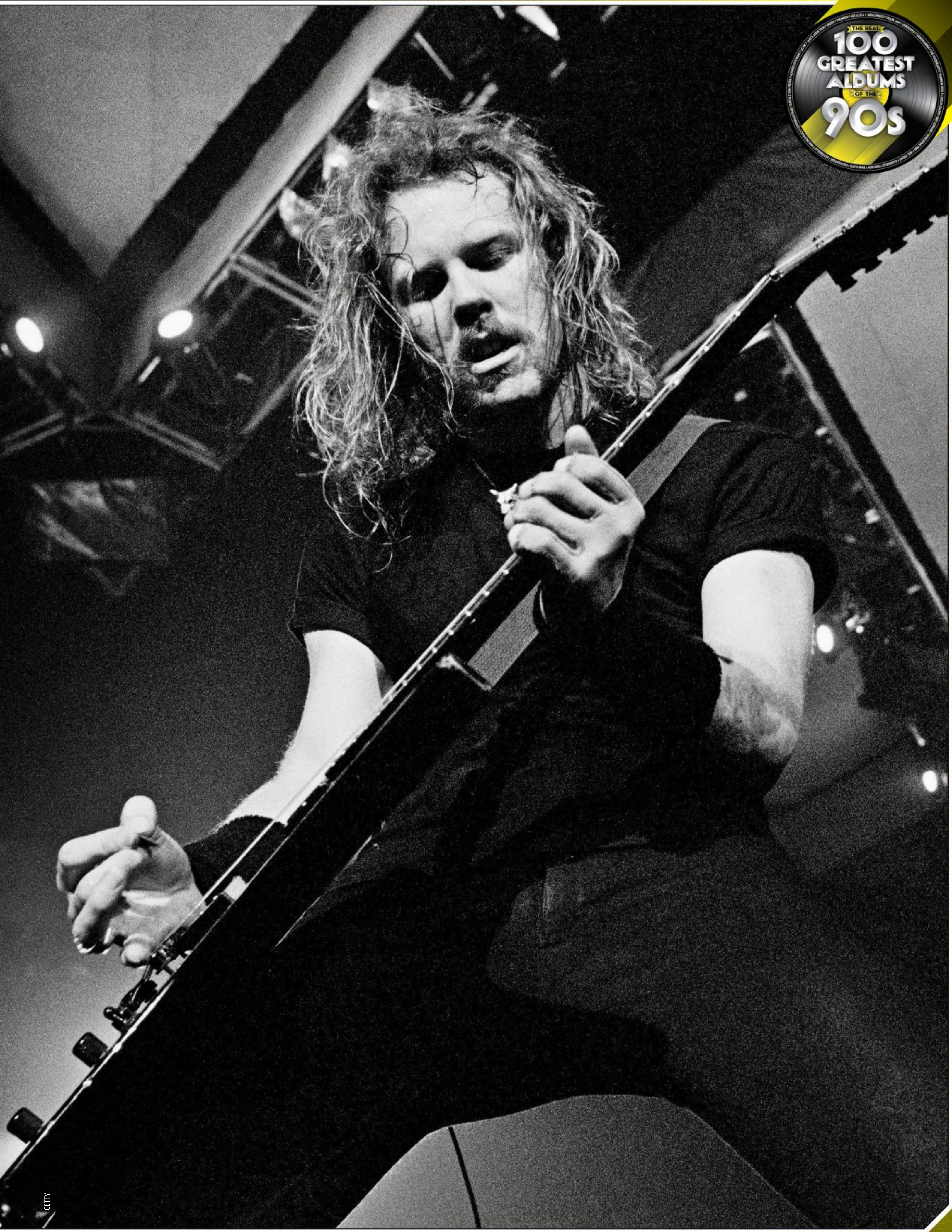
#3. *HOLIER THAN THOU* MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE FIRST SINGLE
Twenty-seven years later, the band still rag Rock for championing the galloping third track as radio gold. He told MusicRadar. "Every time I see the band, they always say the same thing: '*Holier Than Thou*, huh?' They'll never let me live it down."

#4. JAMES HETFIELD WAS CHANNELLING AN MOR CROONER
By1991, Hetfield had the furball bark down pat, but *Nothing Else Matters* required a different approach. "He said: 'Bob, I've never really sang before, I've just kind of yelled," Rock recalled. "He played me a Chris Isaak record and he said: 'On *Nothing Else Matters* and *The Unforgiven*, I want to sing. How do you sing like this?' I said: 'What you hear in Chris Isaak's voice is the nuances when he sings – he isn't doubled. He's actually performing. You perform.'"

#5. THE BULLYING WENT BOTH WAYS
Bob Rock's taskmaster approach was well-documented, the producer goading Kirk Hammett during guitar solos and pushing Ulrich beyond 40 takes on a single song (the drummer recalled the One On One studios having punchbags installed "for fucking tension"). But the band weren't afraid to give it back. Ulrich: "We'd wind Bob up by putting porno pictures all over the studio wall, and most of them were male. Nothing winds up Americans more than the sight of a twelve-inch erect penis."

#6. CLIFF BURTON WOULD HAVE PUSHED THEM FURTHER
Asked in 2016 what Metallica's late bassist would have made of the band's mid-period direction, Hetfield said: "Well, I certainly would have thought there would have been some resistance, for sure. I think the Black Album was a great album… [but] I think Cliff would have probably interjected some different stuff, getting his bass heard and some more musically challenging things, probably."

#7. HETFIELD WAS BRICKING HIMSELF AT THE PREMIERE
With 19,000 tickets given away free by their US label Elektra, the Black Album's grand unveiling at Madison Square Garden on August 3, 1991 was the mother of all listening parties. But for Hetfield, watching from the wings, the record's more divisive moments made for an anxious night: ▷


GETTY

Big sales mean big audiences. Ulrich bangs the drum of the Black Album's success beyond Metallica's wildest dreams.

"I was just waiting for *Nothing Else Matters* to come on. Y'know, to see if these people just look at each other and throw up."

#8. EVEN THE PACKAGING WAS CONSCIOUSLY 'ANTI-METAL'

If the new material stepped away from … *And Justice For All*, then the Black Album's minimalist sleeve was conceived by Ulrich to kick against the iconography of the late-80s metal scene. "All these cartoon characters and all this steel and blood and guts," he said. "It was like:, 'Let's get as far away as possible from this.'"

#9. THERE'S MORE TO THAT SLEEVE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Don't Tread On Me isn't just the Black Album's most political moment, it was also the motto of the Culpeper Minutemen. The militia group fought for the patriots in the American Revolution of 1765-1783, and their flag features a coiled rattlesnake bearing a striking similarity to the serpent on *Metallica*'s sleeve art.

#10. THE BAND HATE AT LEAST THREE SONGS…

Asked in 2012 which song he'd scratch from the Black Album tracklisting, Ulrich sniped at the "shuffle vibe" of *Don't Tread On Me*. In an interview with *Playboy*, Hetfield offered three duds: "There are some songs on there I don't like. *Through The Never* was a little wacky. *Don't Tread On Me*, probably not one of my favourite songs musically. *Holier Than Thou* was one of the sillier songs, more the old style of writing."

#11. …WHILE ROCK WOULD HAVE DROPPED *OF WOLF AND MAN*

"I'll be honest," the producer told MusicRadar. "At first I thought it was silly to write about a wolf. I was like: 'Great, a song about a wolf. What are you fucking getting at? May as well write about pyramids or something'. When metal goes in these kinds of areas, I lose the plot. Then, as we got more into James's lyrics, I realised that the song wasn't silly."

#12. BRIAN TATLER DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD SELL

The Diamond Head leader – and thrash-scene talisman – stayed at Ulrich's home in 1990 and was left nonplussed by early sketches of the material. "He played me some demos of the songs, *Sad But True* and so on," he told Joel McIver. "At the time, it was just James singing *'wah-wah-wah'* on each track, just drums and guitar. And I was wondering how this was going to sell."

#13. METALLICA'S TOUR TURNED UGLY

When the associated *Wherever We May Roam* tour reached the Orlando Arena on March 16, 1992, fans dangled an usher from the balcony by his ankles, during a rampage that resulted in Metallica being billed for $38,000.

#14. THERE WAS NO BIG ALBUM WRAP PARTY

The Black Album was remixed three times and only narrowly hit its pressing deadline. The frazzled group toasted its completion at a local bar, in an exhausted silence – after which Ulrich and Rock didn't speak to each other again for a year.

All smiles, but it certainly wasn't always like that: Ulrich, Rock and Hetfield in a not-trying-to-kill-each-other moment.

#15. BOB ROCK TOOK THE MOST FLAK

Despite the Black Album's commercial slam-dunk, Rock was vilified for meddling with the band's early sound, culminating in a fan petition that urged Metallica to cut their ties with him. "Bob Rock was a huge target," Hetfield pointed out. "Everyone blamed him. He got some horrible death threats and shit from fans."

#16. HAMMETT WAS SCARED OF *NOTHING ELSE MATTERS*

The lead guitarist didn't play on the track, and admitted in a *Village Voice* interview that he held off tackling it live: "We kept putting it in the set and taking it out, until we were certain we were actually able to play it. I had to relearn that whole intro part to play by myself on stage, which was a little bit intimidating for me at that point."

#17. EVEN DAVE MUSTAINE APPROVED

He might have questioned the origins of *Enter Sandman*, but in 2011, the waspish Megadeth man admitted a soft spot for *The Unforgiven*. "I liked it because I thought this was really the first time I've ever really heard James sing," he told *Revolver*. "He had sung before, and he was a great singer. But that was the first time I ever heard him really, really sing."

#18. IT WAS ON THE PLAYLIST AT GUANTANAMO BAY

In 2008, leaked documents revealed that *Enter Sandman* had been used by the US military to "induce sleep deprivation, prolong capture shock, disorient detainees during interrogations and drown out screams". Ulrich felt the interrogators had missed a trick: "I can name, y'know, thirty Norwegian death metal bands that would make Metallica sound like Simon And Garfunkel."

#19. IT TOOK DOWN THE COUNTRY QUEEN

In 2009, the Black Album dethroned Shania Twain's *Come On Over* as the best-selling CD since the introduction of the SoundScan sales tracking system. It hasn't budged since.

#20. FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE HAVE BOUGHT IT THIS WEEK

The Black Album has sold more than 16 million copies, and shifted 267,500 units in 2016 alone. But it's the fact that the record still sells 5,000 copies a week in the US that makes Ulrich gape. "I think you file that one under 'mindfuck'," he says.

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SHE ROCKS #1

Here's the thing. I personally never differentiated between male or female musicians. I think it's because the first rock songs that got me into hard music were *Iron Fist* (Motörhead) and *Don't Call It Love* (Girlschool), on a compilation tape(!). Also growing up with four sisters may have influenced my attitude. For me, there is great music and bad music and that's all. Gender doesn't decide this, songs do. I understand female musicians get shit from misogynistic fans, but if you look at underground doom/stoner there's loads of female bands and musicians who are an equal part of the scene and not an anomaly.

I wonder, playing devil's advocate, if highlighting gender is adding to the problem, rather than addressing it as a small-minded minority holding on to old prejudices? Just asking.

Bobo Coen, via Facebook

It's a completely valid point, Bobo, and, believe me, one we thought long and hard about. There is (and always has been) a disparity in representation, so we thought we'd take an issue to celebrate some of rock's greatest musicians (who just happen to be female). Hopefully in the future we won't have to make a big song and dance about it, it'll just be part of the fabric.

SHE ROCKS #2

Great feature by Mick Wall in @ClassicRockMag about Girlschool. Made me forget I'm a decrepit 50-year-old and feel like I was 15 again.

Mike C, via Twitter

I'm not going to complain about such and such not being featured or so and so being featured. I'm going to say that I found the feature about the blues singers (The Founding Mothers Of Rock'N'Roll) like Big Mama Thornton, Mamie Smith, Sister Rosetta Tharpe etc very interesting. I spent a very pleasant evening on YouTube checking them out. The footage of Sister Rosetta on the platform of the disused Chorley railway station in 1964 was brilliant. Kudos, *CR*, for opening my eyes and ears to stuff I'd never heard before.

David Heaton, via Facebook

Great to see Inger Lorre in the last issue. Her interview really moved me. I was lucky enough to witness The Nymphs at the Bristol Bierkeller on the tour for that one album. Standing behind me watching the support band was Inger, dressed head to toe in feathers, fanning herself with a massive feathery fan thing. A true star.

Chris Wigmore, via Facebook

Just reading through the new issue of *Classic Rock* – what a brilliant issue! Loving reading about all these amazing women rockers. My 10-yr-old daughter is starting to learn guitar – I'll be showing her this mag for inspiration. Great job!

Robert Elliott, via Twitter

SHE ROCKS #3 – MISSING IN ACTION?

With regards to your latest issue 'She Rocks' celebrating women in rock, how on earth could you have possibly overlooked the gargantuan influence that Pat Benatar has had? Just her vast back catalogue alone would have surely warranted an inclusion in this issue.

Martin King, via email

One of the best issues yet. Great to see the women of rock getting their own edition. I could nominate quite a few more names to add to the list, but will just settle for a couple of names that really should have been mentioned. First up is Mariska Veres of Shocking Blue, and second Janita Haan of Babe Ruth. Both women pushed the envelope, and these bands would not be where they are without the distinctive balls-out vocals of these two women. Check out Janita on Babe Ruth's *Black Dog*, or Mariska on *Shocking Blue*'s title track.

Nick Coulbeck, via Facebook

Great issue and a great idea… should have been done long ago! But… no Fanny? You are kidding, aren't you? The first all-female rock band and they barely get a mention, let alone a feature… I'm absolutely gobsmacked. And they've got an album coming out soon – the first for decades! Amazing.

Alan, via email

There was no way to cover everyone (space/time/availability constraints), and loads of great talents didn't make it into the feature. But rest assured, we'll be covering them in future issues. Fanny is up next month, Alan, so stay tuned.

CLASSIC ROCK ALBUM OF THE WEEK CLUB

Every week we choose a classic album – some obscure, some well known – and share knowledge and opinion. Listen and debate with us at: teamrock.com/aotw. Have your say on the history of rock, one album at a time... And you might just see yourself in print.

A Nod's As Good As A Wink... To A Blind Horse

FACES (1971)

WHAT YOU SAID

Stan West: Faces are one of the most underrated bands ever, they're much more than just their hits. Ronnie Lane steals the show here with the songs he sings lead on. *Last Orders Please*, *Debris* and, in particular, the rollicking *You're So Rude* are some of the best songs on the album. Throw in an awesome cover of Chuck Berry's *Memphis, Tennessee* and the smoothness of *That's All You Need* and you're looking at one of the best rock albums of the 70s, bar none! 10/10.

Michael Knoop: For me this is like finding an undiscovered Stones album from the golden age: cocky singer, bad-ass guitar, ethereal organ and honky-tonk piano, drumming that's just showy enough, and every so often another guy steps up to the mic for a change of pace. Entertaining through and through, but particularly love the ballad *Debris*, the choogling cover of *Memphis*… and the take-no-prisoners closer *That's All You Need*, with some epic slide guitar by Ronnie Wood.

Richard Cardenas: The guitar tone, which carries throughout but is especially dirty on *Miss Judy's Farm*, is addictive. There is a soulfulness on this record that's distinctively British blues that has always appealed to me. A working man's record for sure.

James Utvandraren: For someone like me, who spent the early 90s praying at the altar of the Quireboys, I now realise that St. Spike and the gang were merely channelling the very spirit of 'Nod and A Wink'. Here is that Brit rock swagger, with the honky piano, the brazen guitars and the raspy boozy vocals we have all learned to love in a thousand incarnations of bar bands since.

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ROCK'N'ROLL GOINGS-ON IN THE TWITTERSPHERE

GLENN HUGHES
@glenn_hughes
At G3 in LA this eve with Brothers Chad Smith • Joe Satriani • GH • Phil Collen • John Petrucci #musicisthehealer

DUFF McKAGAN
Just watched @theavettbros *May It Last* on @HBODocs. It is indeed sweet and soulful relief from the noise of life. Inspiring band!

NIKKI SIXX
@NikkiSixx
Been building up practicing playing bass with my eyes shut. It really changes how you approach writing bass lines. Obviously you need to know your way around the neck but it also trains your ear. I started with 2 minutes and I'm now up to 10. ANYBODY ELSE ??

RICK WAKEMAN
@GrumpyOldRick
Thought my diet was doing really well when I looked down last night as I was getting undressed for bed & was thrilled when I thought I could actually see my naval, but on close inspection it turned out to be a trouser button that had come off.

GINGER WILDHEART
@GingerWildheart
Phew... echoing @ChrisCatalyst's recent sentiments about vocals being hard work. Not lifting heavy stuff hard work, obviously, but proper psychological graft. Here's a croaky me happy to be done for the day.

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Edited By Ian Fortnam
ian.fortnam@futurenet.com

Judas Priest

Firepower SONY MUSIC

Chaos! Violence! Insanity! Priest are still screaming for vengeance at the top of their timeworn lungs.

As the rockers of the 1960s and 70s enter their dotage, we spend our idle hours wondering how they might be coping with the stresses and strains of modern-day life. Now that Jimmy Page has become Led Zeppelin's self-appointed archivist, we often imagine him down the local vegetable patch, metal detector in hand, searching for hidden treasures. (He got a whole allotment of love.) But truth can be stranger than fiction. It's a fact that Rod Stewart enjoys nothing better than to play with his model trainset. That Eric Clapton banishes the blues by going fly-fishing. That Ronnie Wood loves to pore over his vintage stamp collection. And that former Judas Priest stalwart KK Downing has hung up his guitar and retired to play golf. ("Swinging or dodgy?" as Norman Vaughan might ask.)

But what of Priest themselves? No Earl Grey and Jaffa Cakes down the bowls club for these mighty meaty metal men. Come the year 2018, cometh the hour, and they're still screaming for vengeance – at the top of their timeworn lungs. They're still writing heavy-as-fuck new songs; still releasing heavy-as-fuck new albums. In the place of Downing these days is blond-haired lookalike Richie Faulkner, who has improved his act no end since leaving Lauren (daughter of Steve) Harris's band. Each and every one of the songs on Priest's latest full-length *Firepower* – and yes, we know Legs Diamond were there first – are three-way collaborations between fellow six-stringer Glenn Tipton, frontman Rob Halford and Faulkner himself. And hell, the latter doesn't so much step up to the plate on this, the second album of Priest's BOK (Beyond Our Ken) era, as trample it into tiny little pieces. All he needs is to don a floppy sombrero and all will be complete.

Now, in 1978 Talking Heads released a record called *More Songs About Buildings And Food*. In the case of Priest, what we have here are more songs about chaos, destruction, annihilation, violence, warmongering, brutality, intensity, insanity, the apocalypse, evil stalkers of the

night, earthquakes, tsunamis, planet-splitting volcanic eruptions and – in the case of *Lightning Strike* – inclement weather. As the mighty Thor might quip to his bemused nemesis Loki: "Haven't we had enough of this Ragnarok'n'roll?" Plainly, emphatically, Priest have not. Indeed, today's young guns could and should learn a lot from Halford and his haggard chums. Wanton whippersnappers who favour a nonstop howitzer approach should realise that the best heavy metal has always been about light and shade, good and evil, advance and retreat. A caress of steel, if you will. Priest's Brum-based cohorts Black Sabbath knew this all too well, assuaging their sonic assault with hazy songs such as *Planet Caravan*, along with wistful guitar interludes that might have been called *Fluff* but most certainly weren't. Priest are also masters of this darkest of arts. *Firepower* is far from being a plethora of *Painkiller* rewrites – even if the title track comes close.

Perhaps the best moment occurs halfway through; track seven of fourteen. A soul-stirring instrumental titled *Guardian* – part Trans-Siberian Orchestra, part Brian May on top of Buck House – precedes standout track *Rising From Ruins*, which could be described as the more mature son of Priest's age-old cheeseball anthem *United*. Full of measured drama and with a surprisingly sensitive vocal performance from Halford, the song's message is resoundingly positive and uplifting: *'We're carrying on, rising from ruins, staying as one…'* Whether you're the only metal kid on the block or a beleaguered soul emerging from the rubble in Syria, the thematics ring loud and true. Listen further and you'll find plenty more gentle touches that serve to enhance the dynamics. Alternatively, if it's all-out war you're after, look no further than *Necromancer*, *Flame Thrower* and *Spectre*, aka *The Ripper* revisited. Played live, these songs will surely be even more ear-boggling than on vinyl, as was. You can just picture Halford lumbering about in his bulky leather coat and steel-toe-capped wellies, grimacing until his eyeballs bulge out on tentacles and his ears catch fire. And, of course, Priest being Priest, there are moments of unintentional hilarity. M'lud, I present to you the ejaculation *'Immolate the bodies! No one will be saved!'* as irrefutable evidence.

The production – crisp, clean, ferocious – is nicely judged though. Take a bow, Priest veteran 'Colonel' Tom Allom and relative upstart Andy Sneap – the Batman and Robin of bludgeon. The argument there's no point in heritage bands such as Priest continuing to write new songs and release new albums – when all anyone wants to hear are the greatest hits – continues to rage. And it's true to say that *Firepower*, for all its merits, for all its better-than-it-has-any-right-to-bes, will never, ever be as fondly regarded as, say, past masterworks such as *Sad Wings Of Destiny* and *Sin After Sin*. But if nothing else the album proves that there's life in this battle-scarred British bulldog yet. What's more, this mangy old metal mutt is far from toothless; he ain't gonna be put down anytime soon. As for KK Downing, he must be choking on his sand wedge.

'There's life in this battle-scarred British bulldog yet.'

Geoff Barton

Turbowolf

The Free Life SO RECORDINGS

Grandstanding, riff-filled, psych blow out from Bristol's finest fuzz merchants.

God only knows how much smoke seeps out of Turbowolf's rehearsal rooms. I doubt their singer even knows where the drummer sits among all that fragrant fog, the guitarist's fuzz pedal a low hum as the speaker stacks bleed intermittent stabs of feedback. It doesn't sound like the kind of environment that might equate to an album brimming with infectious melody and stuffed with ideas, but Turbowolf's latest album is their best yet.

For the uninitiated, Turbowolf pick and mix from a range of influences that include Kyuss, Jane's Addiction, occasionally, Sabbath, and a host of spangle-eyed, psych rock bands, but it's their subtitles that elevate them above their Big Muff playing contemporaries. There are moments here that are pure Beefheart or Zappa and his Mothers. The creeping synth lines and an unerring ear for rich melodies means that for all their aural gymnastic bombast, there are real songs at the heart of everything. It's a rewarding, wild ride.

Philip Wilding

The Glorious Sons

Young Beauties And Fools EARACHE

Canadian rockers add a little glitter to their grit.

If The Gaslight Anthem had grown up loving U2 and 80s synthpop as much as they loved Bruce Springsteen, the result would sound very much like The Glorious Sons. The Canadian band have a similar knack to the former for eeking out tales from the rough edge, with portraits of wasted lives (*Josie*) and a character's decent into prescription drugs, joblessness and mental instability (the incongruously perky *Sawed Off Shotgun*), given weight by Brett Emmons' rasping vocal style and chest-clutching lyrics like *'This love is a bloodbath'*. But then the relentless pop drive of *My Blood*, the polished synths of *Come Down* and textbook singalong *'Woah-oh'* chorus of *Everything Is Alright* set them more on a path towards the Vegas stadium rock style of The Killers than their local spit and sawdust bar. An interesting collision of grit and stardust.

Emma Johnston

Dream Wife

Dream Wife LUCKY NUMBER

Part Icelandic, part British paired up in Brighton.

Their debut album is an amalgam of styles – most obviously the infectious fuck-you pop of Yeah Yeah Yeahs, also PJ Harvey and more than a taste of proto-Riot Grrrl bands – with scattergun literate vocals shredding across dancefloor fillers such as *Kids* and the ecstatic *Fire* over state-of-play guitar euphoria and insistent electronic rhythms.

On the brutal revenge song *F.U.U*, you can almost taste the sweat dripping down the walls of the packed, steamy indie nightclub. *Taste* is about as slow as they get, and this is a screamed romp.

Elsewhere, tribute is paid to seminal forgotten Scottish indie band Life Without Buildings as melodies layer on top of melodies, vocals crash into more vocals – singer Rakel Mjöll is a major force – guitars serrate and cut through the bullshit, and tension grows. Always.

Just plain beautiful.

Everett True

The Pearl Harts

Glitter And Spit SELF-RELEASED

Riot girls finally pull the trigger.

The London duo's debut was due three years ago, and it's hard to fathom the delay, given that *Glitter And Spit* sounds like it was fired off in one furious afternoon.

The guitar/drums filth-blues formula is well-worn now, but Kirsty Lowrey and Sara Leigh Shaw twist it up, supplementing their thunderous Zep-knock-off licks with samples, loops and nihilist vocals that suggest they took a few lessons in icy condescension from Shirley Manson while touring with Garbage. The standouts come early: *Black Blood*'s massive stop-start riff, *Go Hard*'s savage S&M (*'Tie you up/tie you down'*) and the pouty, shouty *Lara*, with the pair hollering its scabrous hook like crazed cheerleaders.

It was worth the wait.

Henry Yates

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

Jimi Hendrix

Both Sides Of The Sky *LEGACY*

Jimi's 21st-century rebranding climaxes with the final part of a posthumous trilogy.

The final part of the trilogy that also includes 2010's *Valleys Of Neptune* and 2013's *People, Hell And Angels*, *Both Sides Of The Sky* might not initially send diehards into paroxysms, owing to over-familiar titles and a sleeve that airbrushes Jimi into biopic manifestation Andre Benjamin. But while Experience Hendrix insist that 10 of the 13 tracks are previously unreleased, producer Eddie Kramer's modern technology-assisted brush-up ensures that songs long familiar on bootleg or posthumous albums have never sounded so good.

The much-trumpeted diamonds in the archaeological haul feature Hendrix playing with close friend Stephen Stills. The workmanlike *$20 Fine* could be from tracks Stills said the pair recorded together in London in March 1969, and archivist John McDermott said were being readied ten years ago. There's also Stills's robust version of Joni Mitchell's freshly written *Woodstock*, recorded that September with Hendrix on fluid, funky bass.

The album's highlight is an astonishing *Cherokee Mist*, Hendrix reflecting on his oppressed Native-American heritage, with supernatural feedback. Although Hendrix is credited for playing sitar, could this be the long-sought Holy Grail featuring Brian Jones? Late 1967 also provides a shimmering instrumental sketch of *Sweet Angel*, Jimi exploring the heavenly melody on guitar and vibraphone, and the poignantly personal *Send My Love To Linda* morphs into a liquid wildfire solo.

Jimi jams with Johnny Winter on Guitar Slim's *The Things I Used To Do*, old mucker Lonnie Youngblood on Blind Blake's *Georgia Blues* and Buddy Miles on *Jungle*, an edited jam from 2000's *Morning Symphony Ideas* that joins Curtis Mayfield with Woodstock-closing *Villanova Junction Blues*. Long-time stage fave *Hear My Train A-Comin'* threatens lift-off in one of the album's few truly breathtaking stretches (although May 1970's Berkeley version remains unchallenged).

That leaves playful romps through *Band Of Gypsys* chestnuts *Stepping Stone* and *Lover Man* (aka *Here He Comes*, as reworked from BB King's *Rock Me Baby*). The gloriously louche burn through Muddy Waters's *Mannish Boy* (best of 44 takes in one April 1969 day) has already distinguished 1994's *Blues*, and the contagious acid-funk studio vamp through *Power Of Soul* graced 1997's *South Saturn Delta*.

If this is the last resurrected Hendrix studio material the world will see, then it's a creditable send-off, yet we doubt it's the last gasp it occasionally resembles.

Kris Needs

Andrew WK

You're Not Alone *SONY*

Monumental return from party-metal overlord.

Your party needs you. In the face of a fascist USA, impending nuclear conflagration and rampant global warming, New York's Kegmaster General Andrew WK returns from an eight-year disco nap to remind us that in times of great hardship we must come together for the sake of future generations and party harder than ever before.

You're Not Alone is Andrew WK's enormous, and enormously stirring, maximal synth-metal soundtrack to the struggle, and were it any bigger it'd develop its own moon. Orchestral crescendo crashes upon power riff upon gargantuan chant chorus upon show-stopping fanfare; it's like listening to the Polyphonic Spree getting blitzed on super-strength Kool Aid to old Mötley Crüe records. *The Party Never Dies* could be prime-era ELO crashing their spaceship into the world's biggest frat house, *Party Mindset* imagines the Beach Boys going glam-metal, while *I Don't Know Anything* and *Music Is Worth Living For* are essentially Meat Loaf exploding. If 80s rock music could ever be weaponised, then voila.

Thematically, if previous Andrew WK albums have felt like having entire kegs shotgunned in your face, this one is like being syphon-fed after-dinner brandies. Dotted with spoken-word speeches, sermons and psychological TED talks about how we must "party with our demons" and "keep clarity just out of reach", it explores how 'party', as philosophy, lifestyle and self-help technique, will save humanity. Our round.

Mark Beaumont

Delta Deep

East Coast Live *FRONTIERS*

Def Leppard guitarist changes his spots.

Heavy rock has been stealing from the blues for half a century, so it is surprising how few major players have chosen to repay the debt as explicitly as Phil Collen. Agreeably raw, loud and sloppy, the Def Leppard guitarist's "extreme blues" project Delta Deep also features Stone Temple Pilots bassist Robert DeLeo and seasoned Memphis drummer Forrest Robinson. But it is largely an amped-up showcase for turbo-tonsilled vocalist Debbi Blackwell-Cook (who also happens to be godmother to Collen's wife Helen).

The band's 2015 debut studio album has just been reissued, but this live CD/DVD captures them in their natural habitat as lusty, shouty, interactive stage performers. Freed from the constrictions of a conventional rock band, Collen veers from simmering swamp-blues to pulverising funk-metal while Blackwell-Cook issues sassy orders to the audience: "We wanna see movement, we wanna see attitude, we wanna see fun!" The default 12-bar format drags in places, but *Black Dog* and *Bang The Lid* are hard to beat for sweat-drenched, room-shaking raunch, while the doo-wop-leaning duet *Treat Her Like Candy* adds much-needed emotional shading to what might have been a narrow-focus vanity project.

Stephen Dalton

Starcrawler

Starcrawler *ROUGH TRADE*

Nice and sleazy: LA outfit show off their schlock-rock credentials on feisty debut

With a high-octane, blood-spewing live show and impeccable lineage – frontwoman Arrow de Wilde is the daughter of photographer Autumn – this fast-rising teenage quartet might just be the sonic defibrillator rock needs.

Produced by Ryan Adams, their 10 song, 28-minute (!) debut rips from the speakers, every note played with a gritty determination to prove that new blood can be pumped into narrowed arteries.

So we get blatant nods to Nirvana (*Full Of Pride*), The Stooges (*Chicken Woman*) and The Runaways (*Love's Gone Again*), all delivered by the 19-year-old de Wilde in the manner of a world-weary Courtney Love.

It's ironic, then, that their most telling moment comes when they take their foot off the pedal. Set against a backdrop of shimmering guitars, *Tears* has de Wilde tapping into her everyday anxieties, sighing '*You keep telling me you're coming, but all I get is*

JIMI HENDRIX: CHUCK BOYD/PRESS

tears', every inch a modern-day *Sister Morphine*.

They're not world beaters yet, but Starcrawler's creepy appeal shouldn't be underestimated.

Paul Moody

Black Moth

Anatomical Venus CANDLELIGHT

Yorkshire grit meets goth-metal glamour.

Formed in Leeds, turbo-goth garage-sleaze sludge-metallers Black Moth previously enlisted long-time Bad Seeds percussionist Jim Sclavunos to produce their first two albums, which drew comparisons to Black Sabbath and L7, among others. Now divided between Leeds and London, they have a new label, a new producer and an expanded sonic canvas, adding extra glam-metal polish to their doom-grunge sound and more melodic lustre to singer Harriet Hyde's imperious voice.

Hyde sounds particularly majestic on the churning power waltz *Moonbow*, the prowling loud-quiet beast *Istra*, and *Pig Man*, with its sinister, semi-rapped incantations, which features a cacophony of guitars that howl and scrape like rusty hinges on the gates of Hell.

Despite a handful of more generic tracks, including the gnarly psych-metal chugger *Severed Grace* and the prosaic indie-rock riff-slammer *Screen Queen*, West Yorkshire's earthly conduits for diabolical decadence make great strides on this confident third album.

Stephen Dalton

Philip H Anselmo And The Illegals

Choosing Mental Illness As A Virtue SEASON OF MIST

Ex-Pantera man comes screaming back from the abyss.

Despite his revealing and brutally honest interview with *Rolling Stone* at the end of 2016, Phil Anselmo's reputation could still do with a boost. But whether or not you feel the former Pantera frontman should be able to move on from earlier misdemeanours, his music remains compelling and an often chilling glimpse into a deeply troubled soul.

Even more unrelenting and ugly than the Illegals' 2013 debut *Walk Through Exits Only*, this new collection of snarling diatribes makes no attempt to court mainstream metal fans. Instead the likes of bruising opener *Little Fucking Heroes* and the churning, defiantly on-the-wonk *Delinquent* offer a skewed and intricate take on filthy, underground death metal and nihilistic sludge. The title track is the strongest thing here, its lurching grooves and descent into harrowing slow-motion doom providing Anselmo with the perfect backdrop for his incensed outbursts. Like him or loathe him, he's still got it.

Dom Lawson

Sterling Ball, John Ferraro And Jim Cox

The Mutual Admiration Society MASCOT

Steve Vai and Albert Lee join the R&B jam.

Guitar manufacturer Sterling Ball doesn't let his contact book go to waste on this easygoing, enjoyable busman's holiday. The album is primarily an excuse for him to play guitar in a barroom R&B trio with keyboard player Jim Cox and drummer John Ferraro, but guest guitarists take things up a notch. Steve Vai's happy, relaxed commitment to a favourite from his childhood, Jimmy Gilmer And The Fireballs' 1963 R&B No.1 *Sugar Shack*, is one low-key delight, Cox's urbane Hammond organ solo on *Baby, Please Don't Go* and Albert Lee's picking on sultry country stroll *Cryin' Time* are two more. A wide-open covers policy also ranges from the hayseed kick of Chuck Berry's *Memphis, Tennessee* to The Jacksons' blissful *I Want You Back*.

For all the occasional stardust on the record, the core trio never get ideas above their station. This is unassuming, amiable honky-tonk music for a slow Saturday night.

Nick Hasted

The Bad Flowers

Starting Gun THE BAD FLOWERS

Petal-to-the-metal heavy rock debut.

The term 'power trio' could have been invented to describe this Midlands-based band, so direct and forceful is this propulsive first full-length album. Springing from the traps at full pelt with single *Thunder*, it, displays some impressive songwriting chops and a knowing ear for a solid melodic hook, best exemplified by the helter-skelter riffing of *Hurricane*, *Lion's Blood* and *City Lights*, singer/guitarist Tom Leighton hollering his lungs out with almost ridiculously over-the-top conviction.

Far from being stuck in overdrive throughout, they do quiet and subtle too, on the acoustic *I Hope* and the slow-burn-to-full-conflagration *Let's Misbehave*, but tracks like *Secrets*, with its Rival Sons-style distorted bass, and the Maiden-esque gallop of *I Don't Believe It* are where the real meat lies, the band delivering performances positively seething with raw energy and passion. This is surely an album of material designed for maximum live impact.

Essi Berelian

61 Ghosts

...To The Edge BLUZPIK

This may be why they call it the blues.

A blues album from a guy who worshipped Johnny Thunders? Joe Mazzari even played with his hero back in the 80s. But now his musical odyssey has brought him to Clarksdale, Mississippi, where he recorded this six-track EP that conjours up the dreamy delta and the gritty mean streets in the same breath.

His rhythm section, who are assuredly on the same wavelength, includes drummer Dixie Deadwood who makes up with passion what she may lack in finesse.

It's mainly down to the dynamics that propel the songs. The attitude is as much punk as it is blues, but Mazzari's lyrics have a poetic quality that adds another compelling dimension, while his guitar solos create a dynamic of their own, notably on *World Gone Crazy* where he lets the notes fall away to heighten the tension.

A very absorbing 22 minutes.

Hugh Fielder

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Pussycat And The Dirty Johnsons: a sweat-soaked trip to the heart of rock'n'roll.

PUSSYCAT & THE DIRTY JOHNSONS: DEBBIE ATWELL/PRESS

Pussycat And The Dirty Johnsons

Ain't No Pussy SELF-RELEASED

HTTPS://PUSSYCATANDTHEDIRTYJOHNSONS.BANDCAMP.COM/

First of all, let's hear it for lead screamer Pussy Johnson's pronounced British accent, as snotty and venomous as Rotten's back in the spring of '77. Her impressive snarl and full-throated roar rule the day on this fast and furious ride of primitive, gut-bucket garage rock and boot-stomping, grrrl-powered punk. Tracks like *Pretty Good For A Girl* and *One Of The Boys* deliver a pretty effective message of rock'n'roll equality while basically smashing your skull into splinters. *Surrender My Heart* is the clear pick to click, a searing Kinks-meets-Stooges orgy of corrosive riffs and bump-'n'-grind voodoo rhythm, but there are plenty of highlights here, including the X Ray Spex-y poke-in-the-eye of *Unserpentine*, the floor-shaking, ear-shredding title track and the lean, stripped-down creepy-crawl of *The Wasp*. Imagine if Lux was Ivy and you've basically got the gist of this.

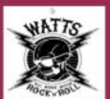
A thoroughly sweat-soaked trip to the heart of rock'n'roll.

Watts

All Done With Rock n' Roll

RUM BAR

HTTPS://WATTS.BANDCAMP.COM



Stellar Stones-on-steroids four-songer from rock's most well-dressed street survivors. From their salad days as teenage glam-slammers to their ill-fated stab at power-pop stardom in the 90s, Watts have always endured, and this tight collection of hook-heavy arena rockers finds 'em at the height of their powers.

Flash House

Brown Sauce SELF-RELEASED

HTTPS://FLASHHOUSE.BANDCAMP.COM

The cassette cover for this positively hair-raising album features the bumpy head of a sasquatch, and that's exactly the feral, wild-eyed figure I imagine when I hear this gonzo banger. It's a howling, pulse-pounding barrage of incendiary noise that's sorta like Motörhead, MC5 and The Hookers being eaten alive by werewolves. Tremendous.

Charm Bag

From Hell KIZMIAZ

HTTPS://CHARMBAG1.BANDCAMP.COM

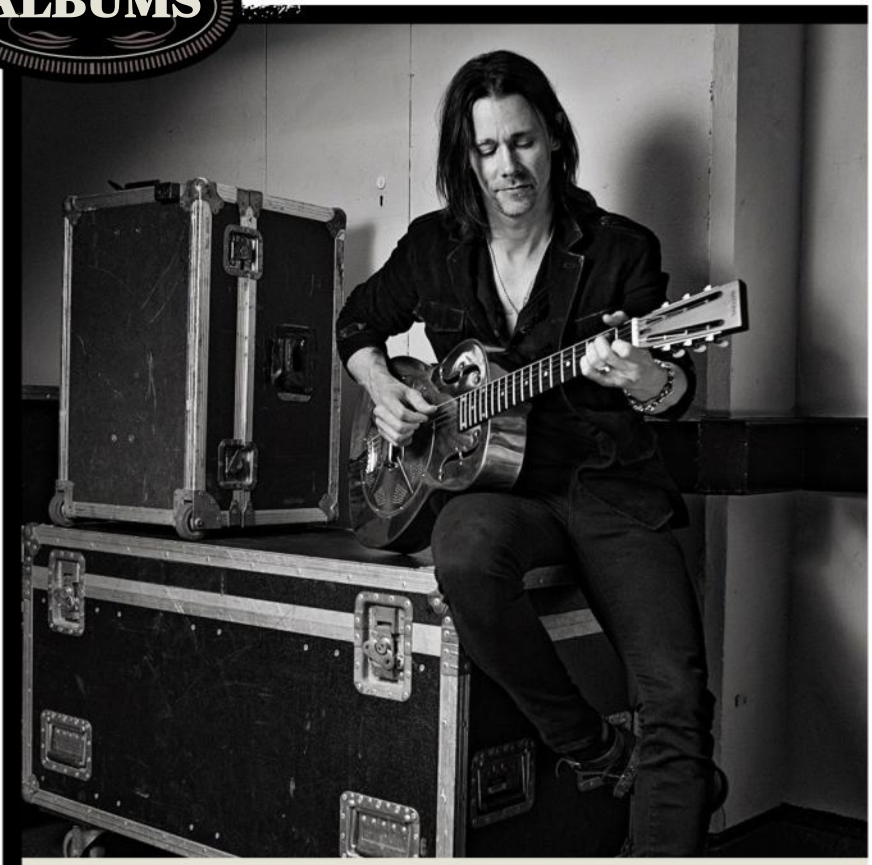
Charm Bag are a dastardly duo featuring members of semi-legendary Spanish garage-rock maniacs The Smoggers. The Cramps and Dead Moon covers probably give a clue to the madness afoot, but for further clarification: this is two cool weirdos running amuck in the graveyard and howling at the moon. As it should be.

Gone Dogs

The Road Ahead SELF-RELEASED

HTTPS://GONEDOGSMTL.BANDCAMP.COM

A fairly blazing dose of late-70s inspired riff'n'roll from this Montreal band. Hard to pin down exactly where they're coming from, but there's flecks of Deep Purple and Iron Maiden and maybe even *Stranglehold*-era Nugent, but mostly it's just balls-out rock'n'roll served up raw and ready. Plus there's flutes, always a bonus if you ask me.



Myles Kennedy

Year Of The Tiger NAPALM

Alter Bridge frontman sings the blues.

Myles Kennedy's first solo album has been a long time in the making. The Alter Bridge frontman spent seven years working on a solo project, before realising that the results weren't right, scrapping the entire thing and starting afresh. It was a bold move, but with *Year Of The Tiger* he's finally hit the mark he wanted.

It's essentially a concept album, with Kennedy focusing on an event in his life that he always wanted to explore lyrically but until now lacked the courage to do so: the death of his father when he was four years old. A Christian Scientist, he refused medical attention and as a result died soon after becoming ill.

The album is billed as a stripped-back, blues-based piece of work, with Kennedy citing artists including Mississippi John Hurt, Chris Whitley, k.d. lang and Nick Drake and Led Zeppelin's acoustic works as inspiration. But while *Year Of The Tiger* dispenses with the heaviness of Alter Bridge, it's by no means a simple singer-songwriter affair.

Much of the album is indeed steeped in the blues: *Devil On The Wall* has a jaunty, country beat ,with Kennedy adopting a southern drawl; *Haunted By Design* is an upbeat ditty that could soundtrack a road trip down a dusty highway. But while there are moments of soft acoustics – particularly in the delicate beauty of *Turning Stones* – and many of the melodies are played on acoustic guitars, banjo and mandolin, most of the songs still swell to grandiose, multi-layered levels, a characteristic certainly synonymous with Alter Bridge's sonic style. *The Great Beyond* is probably the most epic, a sweeping, emotional, string-led affair that's begging to be performed with a live orchestra. But essentially *Year Of The Tiger* sounds like Alter Bridge relocated to the deep south – if they swapped their hard rock riffs for bluesy twangs.

With such intense subject matter, it's a given that /the album will have moments of anguish and often heart-wrenching emotion; Kennedy's pained vocals on *Love Can Only Heal* are particularly stirring. But as the album ends with two elegant and uplifting songs – *Songbird* and *One Fine Day* – the final message is one of finding hope in the darkness, and it's evident that making *Year Of The Tiger* has been a therapeutic experience for Kennedy and should be celebrated.

Hannah May Kilroy

Stone Broken

Ain't Always Easy SPINEFARM

Huge choruses, Britrock attitude.

To call Stone Broken a throwback to the 90s era when Britrock flourished is a little unfair. Because this Walsall quartet definitely belong in 2018. However, you can hear echoes of Feeder and Reef in their sound. There are also hints of Alter Bridge and Nickelback mingling in the shadows. It all adds up to a confident second album.

The songs here are tight and strident, predicated on blossoming choruses and carefully built rhythms. Frontman Rich Moss has one of those voices that oozes emotional sincerity, while the rest of the band allow the music to flourish. There are enough high points to suggest Stone Broken are definitely maturing well, with *Home*, *I Believe* and *Follow Me* standing out as real gems.

The album does occasionally dip a little, but overall it's a clear step forward.

Malcolm Dome

Ginger Wildheart

Ghost In The Tanglewood

ROUND

Wildhearts frontman finds catharsis in country.

Country music has always drawn those with wounds to lick, and it's a natural canvas for Ginger's latest songs, written after the Wildhearts leader – who suffers with depression – quit his medication to see if music worked better than pills.

With profits going to The Samaritans, *Ghost In The Tanglewood* should be applauded on principle. But this music needs no sympathy vote; these are joyous, beautiful, vulnerable songs that can soundtrack only good things. *Paying It Forward*, decorated with swells of slide guitar, is a rousing gee-up, and when *Golden Tears*' lusty shanty demands that we '*build your courage from the cauldron of these molten tears*', only the flint-hearted would sneer at the hard-won sentiment.

The material is often roistering and upbeat (even *The Reaper*'s morbid strum, or *The Daylight Hotel*, whose chiming rock finds Ginger listening through the walls during his treatment at a mental hospital). Yet the songs that really stick are the slowies: *Minus You* is a dreamy waltz-time stunner, while the wistful *Phantom Memories* demands headphones and shivers.

A shoulder-rub for the soul.

Henry Yates

Barrence Whitfield & The Savages

Soul Titans Of Saturn

BLOODSHOT

A timeless knot of soul-powered desperation, salvation and reckless, blinding good times all in one.

While you and I are frittering away our time with whatever dumb bullshit our bosses want, Barrence Whitfield and his Savages are blowing their minds watching Sun Ra documentaries, wailing on saxes and writing gonzo rockers like *I Can't Get No Ride*, *Edie Please* and the far-out space blues jammer *I Want To Go To Mars*. Thank Christ somebody's got their priorities straight.

Whitfield (née Barry White – true) has been an enduring legend in his adopted home town of Boston since the 80s, but it's about time the world at large got with it. The aptly named Savages are absolute monsters here, belting out high-octane, high-velocity soul, rave-up rock'n'roll, lean and sizzling blues, even street-corner doo-wop, with almost alarming accuracy, as Whitfield delivers one jaw-dropping bucket-of-sweat vocal performance after another. *Soul Flowers Of Titan* is an all-night rocker, that's for sure. Could take all weekend.

Sleazegrinder

Marco Mendoza

Viva La Rock

MIGHTY MUSIC/TARGET GROUP

Ace of bass goes solo again.

A cursory glance at Marco Mendoza's CV reveals a man so busy over the past quarter-century or so – most recently with the Dead Daisies – it's something of a miracle he's found time to record this, his first collection of new tunes in seven years.

Unsurprisingly, he doesn't stray from the classic rock blueprint he's been pursuing for much of his career, and this album is all the better for it, rather than providing a vehicle for pretentious experimentation. The title track is a straightforward

celebration of rock in all its glory, while *Sweetest Emotion* and *Love 2 U* bring the funk, and the Soundgarden-tinged *Burned* is perfectly balanced between light and shade. Ultimately, though, it's the covers of Thin Lizzy's *Chinatown* and Ted Nugent's *Hey Baby* that speak volumes about where Mendoza is coming from.

All together an easy-going blast from beginning to end.

Essi Berelian

Legend Of The Seagullmen

Legend Of The Seagullmen DINE ALONE

Aquatic tales of blood and horror, straight from Davy Jones's locker

Of all the genre mash-ups you could possibly imagine for a new prog-metal supergroup to get their teeth into, a nautical spaghetti western concept album would seem like a project destined to founder on the rocks and sink without trace. And yet the music created by guitarist Brent Hinds (Mastodon), drummer Danny Carey (Tool), bassist Peter Griffin (Zappa Plays Zappa) and filmmaker/guitarist Jimmy Heyward (among various others), based on an idea from vocalist David 'The Doctor' Dreyer, is extraordinary, original and ridiculously enjoyable.

Sounding a bit like a salty sea dog Carl McCoy fronting the *Dawnrazor*-era Nephilim, Dreyer's menacing style, detailed approach to lore and freakish characters propel the album forward relentlessly, while Hinds and co. make with the *Fistful Of Dollars*-style metal; *The Orca, Curse Of The Red Tide* and *The Fogger* are all superb, but the standout must be atmospheric closer *The Ballad Of The Deep Sea Diver*, which goes for the absurdly wonderful, full galloping orchestral film score treatment.

Looking utterly bonkers on paper, *Legend Of The Seagullmen* shouldn't work at all, yet it's an early highlight of 2018.

Essi Berelian

Xcerts

Hold On To Your Heart RAYGUN

Young Brightonians with big-time ambition.

Hold On To Your Heart is quite possibly the most millennial album of the year. You can pinpoint the cultural landmarks of their childhood, from the guitar-driven pop of *Busted* (primary school) to the coming-of-age big-school influence of mainstream 2000s emo and the polished stadium soft rock of The Killers, right down to Murray Mcleod's emotional warble and the Cheddary synths bolstering the polished riffs of *Daydream*.

Pop, by the way, is unashamedly at the heart of it all; there's no pretense of indie cool here. *Drive Me Wild* features a blaring sax for an 80s viewed through a prism of nostalgia for a decade they never knew, and a towering, phones-in-the-air chorus, while ballad *Cry* ups the overblown ante even further.

Expect to hear Xcerts on the radio – a *lot*.

Emma Johnston

Michael Schenker Fest

Resurrection NUCLEAR BLAST

Ace guitarist overshadowed in yet another second coming.

Incredibly, guitarist Michael Schenker believes he can resurrect his career by using four singers. On tour it was a novelty, but on 12 new studio tracks the plan faces a stiffer test – with decidely mixed results. Robin McAuley and Doogie White deliver the lion's share and easily outshine the limited input by Graham Bonnet and Gary Barden, both of whom sound past their peak.

The best track is opener *Heart And Soul* (sung by McAuley) with a Judas Priest-like tempo and two fabulous guitar breaks where Schenker spars with Kirk Hammett. Also good are *Warrior* and closer *The Last Supper*, the two on which all four singers share the mic.

Elsewhere, though, the quality dips markedly and the 'old-school' model soon becomes naively old-fashioned and formulaic. Guitar solos shine through sporadically, but the sad fact is that this album sounds like a great player in need of several songs – not several singers.

Neil Jeffries

Desolation Angels

King DISSONANCE

Return of UK-born, now LA-based expats.

Having first arrived, Viking-like, on the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal in the early 80s inspired by Bad Company, Desolation Angels made a respectable debut (self-titled) in 1986, but never really went anywhere except LA and disbanded in 1994. Now, touring a modest rock circuit, they're back with a new album that is so capably, squarely within the metal tradition that it is uniquely conventional. Was ever a more normal metal album made than this one?

Within the bubble in which they reside there is no evidence of exposure to the outside world. The sentiments and treatments of *Doomsday* and *Your Blackened Heart* speak of a world of motorcycle medievalism in which the word 'behold' is still used, while *Hellfire* is their take on the complexity of modern romance as they keep the flag of a non-existent nation flying.

David Stubbs

Imperial State Electric

Anywhere Loud PSYCHOUT

Swedish high-energy rockers live double.

Fronting Sweden's legendary Hellacopters until they crashed in 2008, singer-guitarist Nicke Andersson started his long-planned solo album before deciding to form another band instead. Calling it Imperial State Electric, he brought in guitarist Tobias Egge, bassist Dolf de Borst and drummer Thomas Eriksson, who continued enthusiastically the high-energy rock'n'roll that drew his previous band alongside heroes such as the MC5, tempered with a nod to American radio slickness.

Anywhere Loud presents 23 full-pelt ditties from their five albums, covering the period from 2010's self-titled debut to 2016's *All Through The Night*, plus rambunctious covers of the Dead Boys' *Sonic Reducer* and The Kids' *This Is Rock 'N' Roll*.

Kris Needs

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Ian Siegal: an emphatic return.

Ian Siegal

All The Rage NUGENE

There aren't many reasons to salute President Trump, but at least his hateful reign has pushed Britain's most fascinating bluesman back into the studio after three live albums.

Ian Siegal's first all-original set since 2012's much-decorated *Candy Store Kid*, *All The Rage* is an album of two halves, both excellent. The four songs written solo by the bandleader were "born of concern and fear", and you can hear it, from the ominous drum tattoo of *Eagle-Vulture* to the Latin-themed *Ain't You Great?* ('*They want to kill your neighbours, they're gonna eat their brains*').

Elsewhere, his collaboration with other writers prevents *All The Rage* from banging on. *Sweet Souvenir*, written with producer Jimbo Mathus, is heavenly vintage soul, framed as a conversation with the barman, furnished with a drop-to-your-knees improvised guitar break. Lighter still is *Sailor Town*, its bob-and-weave hook carrying Siegal's flippant snapshot of a roughneck waterfront where '*some of my friends got locked up, most the girls got knocked up*'.

All The Rage is an emphatic return.

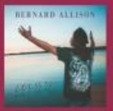
Lance Lopez

Tell The Truth PROVOGUE/MASCOT

If you know Lopez only as the ragged holler behind Supersonic Blues Machine, then *Tell The Truth* is a good entry point to the Texan's wider talents. The guitar work runs with the Lone Star State's sizzling lineage, but it's Lopez's unvarnished world view that marks him out, whether he's riffing on hand-to-mouth life (*Cash My Check*) or the greasy pole (*Never Came Easy To Me*).

Bernard Allison

Let It Go RUF



Chicago great Luther Allison was cut down in his prime; his youngest son Bernard might just be hitting his.

Recorded raw in Tennessee, *Let It Go* is a light-footed, energetic set from a bluesman who can be deeply funky (*Backdoor Man*) and jazzy (*Kiddio*), but always brings it back to home base (for example on *Blues Party*, which imagines an afterlife jam session with his fallen heroes).

Ben Miller Band

Choke Cherry Tree NEW WEST

With their butchered instruments and bastardisation of genre, this Missouri four-piece prick up jaded ears. During *Choke Cherry Tree*'s cultural trolleydash, *Akira Kurosawa* combines fuzz-blues with an orchestral sweep, *Trapeze* pairs wheezy accordion with a choir of angels, *Life Of Crime* nudges into hip-hop and *Sketchbook* is a pop hoedown. It's the best kind of identity crisis.

Various Artists

Strange Angels: In Flight With Elmore James

SYLVAN SONGS

On his hundredth birthday, this tribute underlines the late slide king's still-unfolding legacy. The stars are out: Billy Gibbons and Warren Haynes revitalise *Mean Mistreatin' Mama*, while Tom Jones knocks out a lusty *Done Somebody Wrong*. With Mollie Marriott purring on *My Bleeding Heart*, the torch is being passed.

IAN SIEGEL: WILL IRELAND/PRESS

Tax The Heat

Change Your Position NUCLEAR BLAST

Second album from the Bristol four-piece, with swagger the name of the game.

You can't put a price on self-belief, and Tax The Heat sound so utterly self-assured on this follow-up to their well-received 2016 debut *Fed To The Lions*, you get the feeling that, for them, success is not only inevitable, it's already here. And this ingrained confidence in what they're doing makes the obvious touchstones that provide the bedrock of their sound – the layered Queen choral bursts, the White Stripes simple-not-simple blues battering, the cocksure Thin Lizzy swagger – appear less like pastiche and more like taking the responsibility of carrying a grand old torch. *On The Run* even begins with a burst of what sounds suspiciously like Steppenwolf's *Magic Carpet Ride*, before barrelling into a much more earth-bound game of cat and mouse, as our hero and his girlfriend take to the road to outsmart the police that are on their tail for an unnamed misdemeanour. Basically, it's everything Wolfmother have been attempting for all these years but never quite achieved. Tax The Heat are even happy to pepper *Money In The Bank* with cowbell, and it still doesn't sound too cheesy or dated.

There's more drama at play than a Netflix original series here too, mainly thanks to singer/guitarist Alex Veale's camp vocal flamboyance, with its glass-shattering falsetto flourishes and his clear delight at rolling around borderline daft lines such as *'His disposition, more ammunition/What came first, the eggs or the chickens?'* on the title track.

It's no Darkness style pantomime, though. They're taking a serious look at the utterly astonishing Trump/Brexit/world-falling-apart era we currently find ourselves in. It's just a case of keeping the party going as a reaction against the mess swamping up around us, dancing in the face of adversity and tweaking the nose of the powers that be. *All That Medicine* and *Taking The Hit* even hit a queasy disco stride, although the band do bring things to a close with a dose of glorious windswept gravitas on the soaring *The Symphony Has Begun*, which, like all good cliffhangers, leaves you desperate to know what's going to come in the next chapter.

With a nod of deference to the past grand masters and a thoroughly modern outlook, Tax The Heat are perfectly placed to reintroduce unadulterated classic rock for the next generation. Goodness knows they have the unwavering confidence to give it their best shot.

Emma Johnston

Trespass

Footprints In The Rock

MIGHTY MUSIC

Once NWOBHM hopefuls, now also rans.

In 1980, Trespass were regarded as capable of challenging Def Leppard, with sophisticated melodic hard rock that was exciting. But that was a long time ago and circumstances conspired against them. Now, with only guitarist/vocalist Mark Sutcliffe left from the original line-up which gave us the classic *One Of These Days*, there's little to commend them.

There are the occasional enlightened moments, as with the dual guitar figures on *Be Brave* and the title track, but the shining glimpses are surrounded by long tracts of trudging disappointment. Certain tracks begin well enough, but soon lose momentum and shape, and nothing here comes even close to anything on their 1981 EP *Bright Lights*.

Footprints In The Rock is not an awful album, but it merely underscores how far removed Trespass now are from that era when they were contenders.

Malcolm Dome

Levellers

We The Collective

ON THE FIDDLE

There's more than one way to do the old stuff.

It's difficult to imagine a band more suited to chronicling these turbulent times than the Levellers, but at the very moment they might be expected to lead some sort of charge, they seem to have hit a creative block. So, rather than finally following 2012's rampaging *Static On The Airwaves* with new material, they're celebrating their 30th anniversary by looking backwards and reinterpreting some of their back catalogue acoustically with the aid of a string section and Stone Roses/Muse producer John Leckie.

The result is eight radical reworkings of old singles, which manage to be simultaneously stripped down and lavish, plus two new songs:, the rasping *The Shame* and the wry saga of *Drug Bust McGee*. At its best, *Elation* blossoms in its Ennio Morricone-style setting with distant, booming drums, choral backing vocals and a gorgeous new arrangement, while *One Way*, *Liberty Song* and the crushed hopes of *Hope Street* are reminders that the Levellers were always more than hot air and devilish fiddles. All the same, much as *We The Collective* works on its own terms, a proper new album would have made far more sense.

John Aizlewood

Black Foxxes

Reiði SPINEFARM

South-West rockers exorcise their demons.

I'm Not Well, the 2016 debut from Exeter's Black Foxxes, was uncomfortably raw. Amid its visceral, fuzzed-up riffs, frontman/guitarist Mark Holley bared his struggles with anxiety and Crohn's disease with brutal candour. On new album *Reiði*, however, the alt.rock trio have tentatively let in the light. Tracks like *Manic In Me* and *Saela* (translation: 'blessed') are airy and poppy, imbued with a sense of hope that peeks cautiously through open fingers.

Inspired by Icelandic landscapes, this is a stark, but gentle record that nods to Alice In Chains' *Jar Of Flies* album, simultaneously evoking tenderness and desperation. Despite the pull of dark undercurrents, Holley's catharsis is clearest on opener *Breathe* where he sings like a man talked down from the ledge.

If their debut was dependent on painkillers, *Reiðl* is the sound of a band beginning to heal.

Dannii Leivers

We Sell The Dead

Heaven Doesn't Want You And Hell Is Full

EARMUSIC

Jack the Ripper's mooted influence on metalheads is fortunately minimal.

Jack the Ripper in a metal band was the concept which drew these Swedish scene veterans together. Maybe 'Saucy' Jack's rape-murders lost something in translation, but questions of taste are anyway disarmed first by the Hammer ham of opener *The Body Market*, and then by the baffling irrelevance of the notion to the rest of this debut.

Singer Apollo Papathanasio's day job with Spiritual Beggars'

stoner-metal and guitarist Niclas Engelin's in the barely metal In Flames gives the clue to We Sell The Dead's sluggish, brooding lack of heaviness or threat. The lushly melodic *Echoes Of An Ugly Past*, Papathanasio's florid crooning during *Too Cold To Touch*'s crisis of faith and Trust's redemptive, church-style organ are instead typical.

This band's daring isn't in Victorian splatter, but wrestling with isolation and depression and, in tracks such as *Imagine*, proudly yearning for better.

Nick Hasted

Ministry

AmeriKKKant NUCLEAR BLAST

Revamped group's first album since 2012 death of guitarist Mike Scaccia.

Industrial metal's take on modern America can often feel histrionic and full of apocalyptic overkill. But in Donald Trump the USA has delivered a target ripe for this treatment. and *AmeriKKKant* feels like a measured response to the times. Al Jourgensen's decision to revive Ministry feels apt.

Opener *I Know Words* is stretched over an elongated sample of Trump's inauguration speech, an agony of twisted East European violins and locomotive, industrial undertow. The bomb lands with *Twilight Zone*, its heavy-duty riff churning up despair at the sheer stupidity of Americans that gave rise to their worst ever leader.

The rest of the album is an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink assault of collage, scratch, Tackead-type samples, metal and funk, a blazing regurgitation of the media mania and misplaced rage of modern USA, typified on *TV 5-4 Chan* and *Wargasm*. *Antifa* heralds the heroes of the current strife with a stalking, Buttholes-style bass, a barrage reprised on *Amerikkka*. The titles are devastating in their own right; *Victims Of A Clown* might have felt like a cartoon scenario 10 years ago, today it's reality.

David Stubbs

Ruby Boots

Don't Talk About It

BLOODSHOT

Full-throated country-rock diva puts another dime in the jukebox.

Gravitating to Nashville after leaving her native Western Australia, Rebecca 'Bex' Chilcott has self-consciously assimilated the outward trappings of jukebox Americana, from her Vegas-style stage name to her artfully scuffed alt.country songwriting.

Her second album covers a range of styles, from heartbroken Spector-ish girl-group swooners like the title track to the plaintive piano ballad *Break My Heart Twice* and soft-rock chuggers like *Easy Way Out*. Perhaps because she is not a native, Chilcott strikes a hollow note when she plays the ragged, raunchy, sawdust-spitting country-punk rebel on *Don't Give A Damn*, a sloppy honky-tonk jam with distant echoes of the Stones classic *You Can't Always Get What You Want*. But her powerful, versatile, wide-open voice is a key asset here, elevating the more pedestrian pop-rock tracks and hitting a transcendent peak on *I Am A Woman*, an a cappella ambient spiritual bathed in a spine-tingling glow of David Lynchian mystery.

Stephen Dalton

Go-Kart Mozart

Mozart's Mini-Mart

CHERRY RED

Driving most definitely on the left.

Those of us who know, care. Lawrence of Belgravia is a bona fide, solid gold, unsung pop genius.

Felt (1980s) were the band The Smiths never could have been: dark, sardonic, literate, melodic guitar-pop. Denim (1990s) were bubblegum, too smart – named after the same Dead Kennedys song as Suede, and ineffably more fascinating.

Go-Kart Mozart (now) are everything claimed mostly correctly for Pulp, but… damn, it's like Neil Innes ruled the world, not The Beatles. Ray Davies and Joe Orton waltz in the aisles while Chopin plays roulette, the sardonic Satan is back home to roast, commercial genius tumbling out of every groove. (This is the man who withdrew from popular music because Princess Diana died.)

When You're Depressed is the jauntiest, most real song about depression since *Paint It Black*. *Zelda's In The Spotlight* recalls genius early Mute made-up childlike electro-pop band Silicon Teens.

If you can resist an album that features a glam-stomp titled *12 Knickers On The Line By 3 Chord Fraud* you're a better person than I am.

Everett True

The Lovely Eggs

This Is Eggland EGG

Alt.rock legend helps Lancashire indie pranksters expand their horizons.

Blending defiantly DIY junk-shop punk-pop, psychedelic surrealism and northern small-town humour, The Lovely Eggs have always been a Marmite-level acquired taste. But Lancaster-based married couple Holly Ross and David Blackwell take an evolutionary step forward on this, their fifth album, which upgrades their scrappy, self-produced sound with help from fabled Mercury Rev/Flaming Lips producer Dave Fridmann. Enriched by Fridmann's sumptuous widescreen studioscapes, lo-fi krautrocking chuggers like *Hello I Am Your Sun* or *Wiggy Giggy* shake off their spartan bedsit origins and spread their wings, soaring aloft on warm currents of guitar fuzz and reverb-heavy ambience.

Perhaps in deference to their renowned producer, Ross and Blackwell tone down their juvenile jokey tendencies here, although they still find room for two-minute Ramones-ish rants with titles like *Dickhead* and *Would You Fuck*. Their rebooted, expanded sound hits a sublime peak with sister tracks *Witchcraft* and *Return Of Witchcraft*, anthemic psych-punk piledrivers that take wild digressions into spooky incantations and punchy percussive convulsions. There are echoes here of The Fall in their Brix-era imperial phase, a clobbering garage-rock physicality spiked with dry wit and subversively sweet melody.

Stephen Dalton

ROUND-UP: MELODIC

By Dave Ling

W.E.T.: a fantastic new album.

DAVID GUVA/PRESS

W.E.T.

Earthrage FRONTIERS

New music from W.E.T. comes along all too rarely. *Earthrage* is just the third album from the Swedish-American trio in a decade, and it's five years since the release of previous album *Rise Up*.

Some serious excitement greets the arrival of *Earthrage*, and luckily it's deserved. Perhaps due to the involvement of singer Jeff Scott Soto, who apart from a brief spell with Journey has a background in heavier music (he currently fronts the prog-metal supergroup Sons Of Apollo), W.E.T. are several notches weightier than the Scandi-AOR of keyboard player Robert Säll's main group Work Of Art, while multi-instrumentalist Erik Mårtensson of Eclipse has never been shy of admitting his love of *1987*-era Whitesnake.

Watch The Fire kicks things off in magnificent fashion, and *Kings On Thunder Road*, *Urgent* and *The Burning Pain Of Love* are hook-laden and rarely less than triumphant, cementing the band's position as saviours of a beleaguered yet stubborn genre. While their rivals H.e.a.t refuse to stand still, W.E.T. take the risk-free route and reap the rewards. *Earthrage* is F.A.N.T.A.S.T.I.C.

BulletBoys

From Out Of The Skies

FRONTIERS

Three years ago, BulletBoys singer Marq Torien poured scorn on hair-metal bands that simply "regurgitate their past". This ninth BulletBoys album further distances Torien from his identikit rivals. While some of its tracks validate such talk, others – notably the pop-punk of *D-Evil* (featuring Jesse Hughes from Eagles Of Death Metal) – are plain risible.

Signal Red

Under The Radar ESCAPE MUSIC

Bringing together the talents of vocalist Lee Small (Phenomena, Shy, Skyscraper and most recently Lionheart) and current Ten member Steve Grocott, Signal Red's style of rock is powerful and fiery yet well-grounded in a melodic sense. Grocott excels on guitar and keyboards, while the album reminds us why Small is one of Britain's most underrated singers.

P.A.L.

Prime AOR HEAVEN

Sweden once again hits the bullseye as Peo Pettersson (the 'P' in P.A.L.), Peter Andersson ('A', obviously) and Roger Ljunggren (you're right, he's the 'L') return to the 1980s with *Prime*, an album crystalline, pure AOR. *Hiding Away From Love*, *Wildfire* and *One Step Away* offer nothing remotely new, although their sense of celebration is both unmistakable and irresistible.

No Hot Ashes

No Hot Ashes FRONTIERS

With this self-titled new album, No Hot Ashes are releasing their debut some 34 years after the band formed. How come? It's a long story. But Eamon Nancarrow has an agreeable voice, their take on traditional hard rock themes is colourful and warm, and strong production from FM's Merv Goldsworthy and Pete Jupp deposits the metaphorical cherry on a rather fine cake.

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Roxy Music

Roxy Music UMC

Fully loaded re-make/re-model of 1972 debut album.

The early 70s were a golden age for prog, pop, glam, proto-metal and art rock, and Roxy Music somehow fitted in all of those categories. Or rather they didn't actually fit in any.

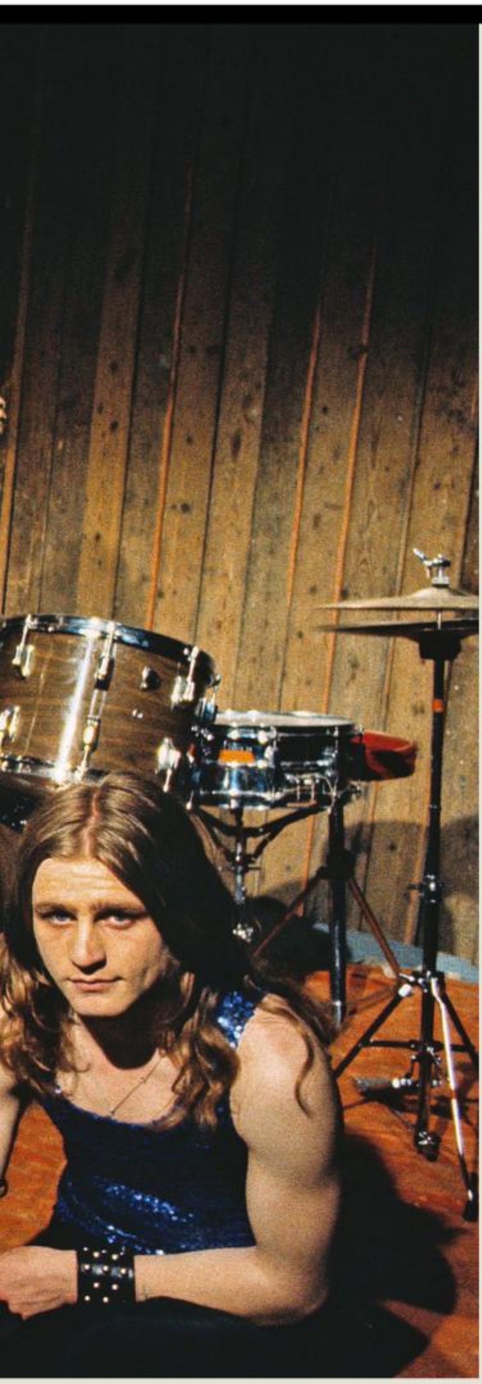
Considering their original guitarist, Davy O'List, was in The Nice, frontman Bryan Ferry had auditioned for King Crimson, they shared management and Crimson's lyricist Pete Sinfield was their producer, you would imagine Roxy had most in common with the prog fraternity, and indeed there are examples of sectional songwriting – notably the six-part *The Bob (Medley)* – and far-out spacey noodling on their self-titled debut that are very prog indeed. Then again, their first single, *Virginia Plain*, was a succinct concoction that reached No.4 in the UK, placing them immediately in a pop context. They certainly dressed glam, but theirs was a cooler, more fashion-forward image than the bacofoil yobbery of The Sweet *et al*. They could do Sabbath-heavy bombast, yet they could contrive a memorable melody and were made for *Top Of The Pops*.

If anything they belonged with those other artful outfits that didn't belong: 10cc and Sparks, who like Roxy were also busy in 1972 formulating a new kind of patchwork pop out of the remnants of not just rock's recent past but almost all of 20th-century music.

There was obviously something in the air. David Bowie released *Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* in June 1972, just two weeks before Roxy's debut. Now here was a visitation from an unheralded future by another bunch of alien insect-humans in gaudy, shiny finery.

Roxy Music's debut appearance on *TOTP* performing *Virginia Plain* was as abrasively, thrillingly strange as Bowie doing *Starman*. That was where the great British public got their first glimpse of the heavy-lidded Ferry, Brian Eno grinning impishly behind his synth, sax-mad Andy Mackay in sparkly yellow and green, louche, long-limbed bassist Rik Kenton, guitarist Phil Manzanera, all beard and outsize

ROXY MUSIC: GETTY



shades, and drummer Paul Thompson, his leopardskin off-the-shoulder number notwithstanding, the sole concession to normal blokedom. Individually odd, they just about cohered as a unit.

Their self-titled debut album was an equally gobsmacking clash of styles and sonics. Track one *Re-Make/Re-Model* – the greatest song ever to have a chorus based on a car number plate – opens with the hubbub of guests mingling at an art gallery, Roxy's natural milieu. Thereafter it is barely controlled chaos, all sax squawks, honky-tonk piano, snarling guitar and Eno's synth disturbance: where 50s rock'n'roll meets avant-garde sound collage. Or, considering its arch provocation, think punk five years ahead of schedule. *'I can talk, talk, talk, talk, talk myself to death,'* Ferry sneers. *Ladytron* finds the singer revisiting pop-romance tropes (*'You've got me girl on the runaround, runaround'*), but the sci-fi/tomorrow's-world title evinces the distance travelled since The Beatles' *Love Me Do*.

For all Eno's live-in-the-studio mangling of Manzanera's guitar and Mackay's sax sound, the vocals are the most tampered-with, but it's Ferry himself doing the 'treating'. On the first half of *If There Is Something*, over weirdly basic country boogie, he affects a hick yodel, only to shift, in the second half, to a strangulated yelp, his shrieked plaints over sorrowful oboe (*'I would do anything for you, I would climb mountains!'*) a grotesque parody of a paramour. *2HB*, with its wafts of smarmy sax, anticipates the 'perfume sigh' of later, *Avalon*-period Roxy, but Ferry's sulphurous tone injects a healthy dose of toxicity. On *Chance Meeting* he's eternally trapped in a 40s *Brief Encounter* as Eno-inflected guitar smears colour across the black-and-white canvas. But it's on *Sea Breezes* that Ferry is at his most extreme and stylised, the anguished lothario adrift in a cruel present: Manzanera's amazing, crazed scribbles are like Hendrix travelling back in time to interrupt a recording by Rudy Vallée.

On *Roxy Music* there is a consistent merging of – or frictional collision between – different eras, right up to (the) *Bitters End*, which closes the album with Ferry playing Noël Coward against snazzy doo-wop harmonies. However, on one occasion, *Would You Believe?*, they sound banally retro, like glam greasers Mud. Not a mutant Mud, literally just like Mud. It's difficult to believe it's the same band moving methodically from the sound of battle-fire to pastoral interlude to campfire singalong to the black-hole sun-sucking vortex of a riff to climactic timpani on *The Bob (Medley)*.

That aberration aside, *Roxy Music* is an immaculate conception. And now, in this Super Deluxe Edition, even more so. Bumper new sleeve-notes from Richard Williams, who first wrote about the band for *Melody Maker* in 1971, plus previously unreleased demos, out-takes, radio sessions, and a 5.1 remix of the album by Steven Wilson shed further light on the record. But in a way it's best not to focus on the messy act of creation, just the finished product, from the chic sleeve art to the still-jarring sonics of this post-modern pop that continues to intrigue 46 years on.

'An immaculate conception, now even more so.'

Paul Lester

Ghost

Ceremony And Devotion

SPINEFARM

The Popestar tour in all its live glory.

With a work ethic that is as old-school as it is arduous, Ghost continue to recreate the work of the 70s and 80s bands that have gone before them – BÖC's spooked-out metal, Alice Cooper's greasepaint and panache – with the last bastion of the glory days of rock'n'roll: the double live album.

As enigmatic as they are enthralling, Ghost go through nameless ghouls like a tornado tearing through a wheatfield. Not that it matters, as frontman aside, it's not like anyone could ever pick any of the band out of a line-up. It certainly hasn't bothered their US audience, hooting and hollering every choreographed move on this slick run-through of the greatest thing about Ghost: their songs; the shimmering *Ciricie*, the thundering *Square Hammer*, the brooding *Year Zero*, bright sparks all, fuelling Ghost's fire.

Philip Wilding

Hawkwind

The Emergency Broadcast Years: 1994 – 1997

ATOMHENGE

This is Earth calling. Patchy 90s foursome collected.

Here we have a rather under-loved quartet of albums from the multiverse-sized corpus of Ladbroke Grove's finest: *The Business Trip Live, Alien 4, Love In Space, Distant Horizons.*

There was at least some relative stability in Hawkwind's mid-90s line-up, alhough bassist Alan Davey's tenure would be up at the end of this period. With new vocalist Ron Tree in the ascendancy, the Venn-diagram crossover threw up the best of the bunch: the punchy two-disc live album *Love In Space*. Early signs of Tree's suitability for the role can be detected in *The Camera That Could Lie*, a not entirely credible cod-reggae workout channelling the crusty heights of 1989's *Traveller's Aid Trust* album (a compact capsule of the free festival/convoy scene) on which Tree's former band 2000DS were co-conspirators.

Although all the narrative aesthetics – abduction, blue skin, space sex – are present and correct on 1995's *Alien 4*, the inevitable comparisons with Robert Calvert are not entirely in Tree's favour, unfairly hampered by a notable lack of musical ideas; more *X-Files* than *Xenomorphs*. Fortunately the live version of the album (*Love In Space*) cherry-picks the best and dials up the heft, revealing previously hidden facets. Davey's *Sputnik Sam* is the throbbing pop-rock highlight, while trademark oscillators and cosmic bleepage plot directly back to the glory days of *Space Ritual*.

By *Distant Horizons*, Tree's absorption into the mothership was complete, bringing a punky abrasion to the by now trance-heavy table. And with it, another new, if short-lived metier.

Tim Batcup

Anti-Nowhere League

The Albums 1981-87

CHERRY RED

Four-disc compilation of Tunbridge Wells 80s punks.

If you were still punk in 1982, then you'd missed the point of punk. At least that was the thinking back then, and consequently Anti-Nowhere League were critical pariahs, considered lumpen and backward. Decades later, however, they can be taken for what they are: a capable, solid band making records that now, once again, would be considered pretty shocking in their content.

Their debut album, *We Are The League* remains their best, its big, thick sound and tumbling riffs as close to Motörhead as it is to punk, its terse sentiments a manifesto of defiant ugliness that refuses to be prettifed, 80fied, as on *Animal* (*'I'm a child molester… a living abortion'*). 1987's *The Perfect Crime* is therefore surprising – an attempt to get with the well-produced times, the worthy sentiments of *Johannesburg* delivered by Animal in tones reminiscent of Europe's *The Final Countdown*.

The *Live In Yugoslavia* disc, from 1983, sees the League greeted by anthemic chants of "We are the league" (wonder how many of them ended up involved in actual wars?), while *Rarities 1981-4* includes 1981's *So What*, the gloriously profanity-streaked B-side of their cover of Ralph McTell's 1974 hit *Streets Of London*.

David Stubbs

Edgar Winter

Tell Me In A Whisper, The Solo Albums
I've Got News For You *HNE*

Several incarnations, two sturdy box sets, one genre-defying rocker.

Edgar Winter's freewheeling career through the 70s was untrammelled by any petty constraints such as style or continuity. A quick flip through the miniaturised covers of these 10 albums rounded up into two box sets proves the point perfectly; no two consecutive sleeves appear to have any connecting link.

It doesn't help that he released these albums as Edgar Winter, the Edgar Winter Group or Edgar Winter's White Trash. And while the two box sets separate his solo albums from his band albums the division is somewhat arbitrary.

Musically, Winter crossed genres with abandon, because he could. In contrast to his older brother, the more taciturn Johnny who sank himself into the blues, Edgar, a musical prodigy, had an ebullient enthusiasm for all manner of styles – pop, jazz, soul, funk, blues and rock'n'roll – that was reflected in song titles like *We All Had A Real Good Time, Still Alive And Well* and *Keep Playin' That Rock And Roll*. Some po-faced critics frowned upon such frivolity and Winter seldom got the acclaim his talents as a keyboard player, saxophonist and composer deserved. But audiences lapped up his party attitude and his albums caught that atmosphere.

The six-CD *I've Got News For You* **(8/10)**, is the better set because it features Winter's mates including Rick Derringer, Ronnie Montrose and Dan Hartman – white trash indeed! It also includes Winter's two best albums, 1971's self-titled debut from Edgar Winter's White Trash where the infectious rock'n'roll boogie is broken up by a couple of gospel-tinged songs (*Fly Away* and *Save The Planet*) and the poignant anti-war ballad *Dying To Live*, and 1972's *They Only Come Out At Night* by the Edgar Winter Group which features two of his biggest hits, the monstrous instrumental *Frankenstein* and *Free Ride*. The live White Trash album, *Roadwork*, follows close behind with an extended version of *Tobacco Road* featuring Winter's trademark scream.

The four-CD *Tell Me In A Whisper* **(6/10)** set gets off to a rollicking start with Winter's 1970 debut, *Entrance*, where the first half dozen songs are cleverly segued together. But the late-70s albums struggle to maintain quality and 1981's *Standing On Rock* is an ill-advised venture into sci-fi.

The only missing album from Winter's halcyon 70s output is his classic album with brother Johnny, *Together* from 1976, probably for contractual reasons. But there's more than enough to be getting on with here.

Hugh Fielder

Various

Concert For George *UMC*

All-star tribute show revisited in bulk.

Held back in 2002 at London's Royal Albert Hall to mark the first anniversary of George Harrison's death, this star-studded memorial performance of many of the former Beatle's finest compositions, by some of his closest friends and colleagues, retains its significant emotional impact. That said, four discs of vinyl by comparison to *The Concert For Bangladesh*'s three? Side one's just over 11 minutes long; side seven, 15 minutes and side eight, an etched vinyl mandala. It's all a bit excessive and – on this occasion – not for charity. But while the Beatles' dollar remains punchy on global markets, go figure, as they say. Of course, these aren't definitive readings, but you'll doubtless find yourself moved by Jeff Lynne's heartfelt *Give Me Love*, Tom Petty's *I Need You*, McCartney and Starr hooking up on *For You Blue*, *Something* and *All Things Must Pass*, and Eric Clapton's superb takes on *Beware Of Darkness* and a timber-shivering *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*. Ultimately though it's the sweet understatement of Joe Brown's closing *I'll See You In My Dreams* that steals this fitting tribute show on its tear-stained final bow.

Ian Fortnam

The Monochrome Set

1979-1985: Complete Recordings *TAPETE*

Non-stop colourful pop excellence.

For a while in the late-70s The Monochrome Set were fingered as an arch post-punk enigma, belonging to a tradition that includes Wire, The Smiths, Blur, Microdisney and The Divine Comedy, though they weren't really in thrall to any trend. This glorious box set gathers their first four albums plus a generous array of singles and reinforces the view: how the hell did they miss the boat? The opening *Strange Boutique* sets the scene, mingling fantasy scenarios with music for imaginary soundtracks like a cut-price Eno on the title track or an English Talking Heads on *Love Goes Down The Drain*. Their second 1980 release, *Love Zombies*, is a richer neo-psychedelic affair that bubbles with instrumental invention, showcasing lead singer Bid's cool lyrics and lead guitarist Lester Square's ability to reference Jet Harris or Arthur Lee with the flick of a plectrum. *Eligible Bachelors* is their masterpiece thanks to the surf epics *On The 13th Day* and *The Midas Touch*. The big budget *The Lost Weekend* (1985) was a push for stardom but its dreamy eccentricity never clicked. Too bad, because the Set's social send-ups and droll rock modernism were way ahead of the game. Turn on and tune in.

Max Bell

Toto

40 Trips Around The Sun: The Greatest Hits *SONY LEGACY*

Re-formed AOR stalwarts add new material to old favourites.

For a few years at the end of the 20th century it seemed that Toto and the AOR scene they sprang from would remain forever in a shaggy-permed time capsule. What fools we were to write off officially ratified timeless soft rock classics such as *Africa* and *Hold The Line*.

Those two are naturally included on this new compilation, but of more interest to long-time fans will be the trio of new songs written by the current line-up, featuring founder members Steve Lukather, Steve Porcaro and David Paich alongside their post-Bobby Kimball frontman Joseph Williams.

It's easy to forget that Toto were always more than just a rock act. Even vintage-era hits such as *Georgy Porgy* and *Rosanna* remind us here that they always liked to weave disco and R'n'B elements into their sound. But later genre-hopping cuts found here have aged less well. The soul-pop of 1988's *Pamela* and 1992's jazz-funk instrumental *Jake To The Bone* are expertly crafted, but Toto always sounded best with one foot on a rock touchstone.

The new tracks back up that impression further, as *Struck By Lightning* is underpinned by gutsy riffage and Bonham-esque thunderdrums as Williams' falsetto-ish vocal reaches for the higher emotional registers.

Dramatic chimes of piano also

give *Alone* a pleasing urgency, and the woah-oh choruses of *Spanish Sea*, punctuated with fizzing synth breaks and monitor-perching guitar solos, show Toto have themselves concluded that visceral punch as much as pop charm is what they'll be remembered for.

Johnny Sharp

Billion $ Babies

First Ever Live Show: Flint 1977 GONZO MULTIMEDIA

What the Coopers did next.

After *Muscle Of Love*, Alice Cooper pretty much split into two at the behest of the title player. It was a grubby little coup that saw the quintet's alcoholically-encumbered heart and soul lead guitarist Glen Buxton pointedly uninvited to either party, and (predictably) the vocalist walking away with the name, notoriety, audience, budget and ultimately, fame.

Those who initially thought they were on solo album hiatus (Neal Smith, Dennis Dunaway, Michael Bruce) eventually teamed up with guitarist Mike Marconi and Bob Dolan on keys and made an album (*Battleaxe*) with material they'd written for the next AC album, and *Welcome To My Nightmare* it most certainly wasn't. Here, captured in bootleg-esque lo-fidelity, is the debut gig of what's essentially a superior tribute band, playing a handful of Cooper hits alongside a sprinkling of new material that's never quite up to the mark. Bruce does his best behind the mic, but he's no Vince. All involved excel, but the magic's gone.

Ian Fortnam

Valentine

Valentine ROCK CANDY

Talk about right album, wrong time!

Had it been released in 1988, there's no doubt that this album would have been huge. Dripping with sumptuous power and widescreen tunes, Valentine was a heavier version of Journey. Instead, though, it came out two years later, by which time AOR had skidded over the cliff edge.

However, listening now, it is clearly a classic of the genre. And deserved a better fate than to be consigned almost to obscurity.

Led by smoothly evocative vocalist Hugo Valenti, Valentine ride through all facets of melodic rock. From the forceful *Runnin' On Luck Again* and *Too Much Is Never Enough* to the power ballad glory of *Never Said It Was Gonna Be Easy* and *Tears In The Night* and the pomp of *Where Are You Now* and *Once In A Lifetime*.

Celebrate this album for its enduring AOR brilliance.

Malcolm Dome

Graham Bonnet

Flying Not Falling 1991 – 1999 HEAR NO EVIL/CHERRY RED

Three from GB.

Collecting Graham Bonnet's solo albums in the 90s often required hiring private detectives to track them down, and a willingness to sell a kidney to cover the price of Japanese imports. This set sees them rounded up, rounded out with bonus live cuts (Alcatrazz and Rainbow faves) and remastered. *The Day I Went Mad* (1999) features Slash and Viv Campbell adding fretboard finesse to a varied collection of melodic hard rockers, one of Graham's strongest solo releases. *Underground* (1997), with fellow Alcatrazz escapee Danny Johnson, has experimental moments, but hits the spot in the main, the Skegness Soprano particularly forceful on *Whiplash* and a bracing take on Jimi's *The Wind Cries Mary*. *Here Comes The Night* (1991) revisits Bonnet's pop and soul roots with Rainbow bandmate Don Airey on keyboards, highlights including Sam Cooke's *A Change Is Gonna Come* and The Kinks' *I Go To Sleep*.

Rich Davenport

Gary Wright

Reissues ROCK CANDY

Pioneering third and fourth albums from consummately talented Spooky Tooth man.

By the time he released the smash single and title track of his soul-injected and lovingly textured 1975 solo album *Dream Weaver* **(7/10)** Wright had a wealth of experience to draw on. A child actor who first recorded in the 1950s, he'd given up music for medicine and psychiatry before making a mark with Spooky Tooth at the end of the 60s.

Keyboards predominate in a soundscape where Wright's own synthesisers and keyboard skills are complemented by the plush rich keyboards of future Michael Buble and Celine Dion producer David Foster.

Vocally one of the great blue-eyed soul men, it's small wonder Wright's luminous songwriting and arranging skills found favour with pal George Harrison.

The Quiet One shared Wright's preoccupation with spiritual transcendence preeminent on 1977's *The Light Of Smiles* **(7/10)** where the bold flourish of *Silent Fury* signposts the way to the next decade's power ballad form. Accompaniment from drum aces Jim Keltner and Ronnie Wood's brother Art, future Toto man Steve Porcaro and songs (including a co-writing credit for Paramahansa Yogananda on *I Am The Sky*) provide platform for Wright's radiant musical skills and tender humanity rather than extra curricular proselytising. Works of a prodigious talent, open ears will be rewarded.

Gavin Martin

Venom

Assault! DISSONANCE PRODUCTIONS/NO SURVIVORS LTD

The original black metal band's classic-era EPs boxed. Satan heavily featured.

VENOM: GETTY

The heavy metal scene of the early 80s had all manner of cartoon characters: fake Barbarians Manowar and Thor, glam rock cross-dressers Twisted Sister and Wrathchild, satanic spooks Mercyful Fate and Venom. The latter were arguably the most OTT and the most ridiculed of all, a trio of Hammer Horror-inspired devil-worshippers from Newcastle with silly names – Cronos (bass/vocals) Mantas (guitar), Abaddon (drums) – who struggled to play in tune and in time, and wrote songs about the dark side because, as Cronos explained, "Satan were a reet bad lad". And yet, for all the intrinsic comedy value, this was one of the most influential bands in the entire history of heavy metal.

The evidence is writ large in this new six-CD box set, featuring EPs from Venom's glory years, each named for a specific market – *Canadian Assault* to *Scandinavian Assault*. In a live recording of *Witching Hour*, a track first featured on 1981 debut *Welcome To Hell*, there is the frantic riff that Metallica recycled for the seminal thrash metal blaster *Whiplash*. In the evil, queasy rumblings of *In Nomine Satanas*, from 1982, are the roots of Slayer's whole career. In the manic *Bloodlust*, the bludgeoning fury and 'death grunts' of the nascent Celtic Frost. And in the raw power and chilling atmospherics of *In League With Satan* and *Countess Bathory* are the seeds of Norwegian black metal.

As a package, *Assault!* is flawed. A basic clamshell box includes no liner notes or memorabilia. A Goat of Mendes key ring would have been nice. There is also heavy repetition of certain tracks across the EPs.

What is extraordinary is how potent Venom's early music still sounds after all the advances in extreme metal over 30-plus years. The sheer brutality and malevolent intent of the original black metal band still sounds as shocking as when *Classic Rock*'s Geoff Barton described them in a 1981 *Sounds* review as "the musical equivalent to the Earth splitting asunder and revealing a filthy, gaping maw to the Kingdom Below". And in two songs in particular – the roaring *Warhead* and the epic *Seven Gates Of Hell* – there is an evil genius, like Sabbath in their prime. As Cronos – Conrad to his mum – once said: "Ozzy was tormented by demons, but I wanted to *be* the demon!"

Paul Elliott

Napalm Death

Coded Smears and More Uncommon Slurs *CENTURY MEDIA*

Juicy off-cuts and blood-soaked rarities from the avant-metal abbatoir.

More than three decades after they first plunged their bowel-exploding grindcore weaponry into the soft underbelly of the metal mainstream, Napalm Death still transcend every joke and cliché about their apocalyptic blast-furnace extremism. Their most recent studio album, 2015's *Apex Predator – Easy Meat*, was one of their most uncompromising to date, both sonically and politically. As this 31-track double-disc collection of rare and unreleased material spanning 2004-2016 proves, these long-serving avant-thrash icons have matured, but not mellowed. They remain true originals, thrillingly abrasive, gloriously ugly, a standing challenge to the safe conventions of heavy rock.

One of the Death's most endearing qualities has always been the dark, sarcastic humour that informs even their most brutal sonic battering rams. It's here in arch titles such as *Phonetics For The Stupefied* and *Like Piss To A Sting*, both eardrum-busters. You can hear it again in *Clouds Of Cancer/Victims Of Ignorance*, which wrongfoots listeners with its plaintive piano introduction before erupting into a breakneck rage-punk assault. There's also mischievous wit in giving the Shakespearean title *What Is Past Is Prologue* to another cacophonous face-melter.

The Death's power-grind still packs an exhilarating punch, notable examples here including *We Hunt In Packs* and *Call That An Option?* But such hyper-aggressive pummelling can wear down to a one-dimensional caricature over the long haul. Many of the more arresting tracks on this varied but generally strong double album are those which push the band outside their familiar discomfort zone; stylistic outliers like the occultish incantation *Oxygen Of Duplicity*, an unusually subtle digression into brooding gloomcore, or *Omnipresent Knife In The Back*, which combines heady psych-rock chaos with surprisingly melodic undertones. The menace-laden execution anthem *Atheist Runt* is another ear-catching oddity.

Essaying a rare cover version, the Death also make a decent fist of The Cardiacs' *To Go Off And Thing*, moving beyond metal into a looking-glass otherworld of angular, carnivalesque art-punk surrealism. It was first released in 2013, with all revenues going to stricken Cardiacs singer Tim Smith. Which proves that behind their ferocious horror-mask of planet-crushing nihilism, Napalm Death are not just diamond geezers but also national treasures.

■■■■■■■□□□

Stephen Dalton

Ringo Starr

Ringo *CAPITOL/UME*

Remember fun? Before we all grew up it sounded like this.

There was a time when everybody liked Ringo. The record-buying public gladly guzzled on his dour vocal flatness. In '73, the year of *Ringo*, America granted him a brace of No.1 singles while John Lennon's *Mind Games* stalled at No.18.

His musical peers queued to appear on his records (all four Beatles are on *Ringo*, as are The Band, Marc Bolan, Harry Nilsson, Martha Reeves… how long have you got?). All involved seemed equally delighted to donate perfectly servicable compositions: Lennon's autobiographical *I'm The Greatest* (a song its composer recognised he probably wouldn't get away with personally, but that Ringo's perceived humility would render palatable), McCartney's *Six O'Clock*, a saccharine ballad that might have served Macca well, given enough Wings, and Harrison's Band-enhanced country-folk belter *Sunshine Life For Me (Sail Away Raymond)*.

Elsewhere, T.Rextasy-peaking Bolan puts a little extra spring into the swagger of Randy Newman's *Have You Seen My Baby*. And then there's the two US chart-toppers: *Photograph* (Ringo's creditable co-write with Harrison) and an apparently irresistible take on Johnny Burnette's *You're Sixteen* which, while catnip to the airwaves in its day, with its weapons-grade hooks courtesy of *Mary Poppins* tunesmiths the Sherman brothers and contemporaneously en vogue 50s nostalgia, now only raises eyebrows for the suspect nature of its lyric.

That said, if you can shake the image of today's no-autographs, V-flicking Ringo to remember when he was a national treasure, a game-for-anything John Noakes of the drums, maybe you'll suspend your post-millennial sophistication just enough for *Ringo*'s unpretentious time capsule to rework its peculiar magic.

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Ian Fortnam

Nightwish

Decades *NUCLEAR BLAST*

'Best of' album – backwards.

The two-CD *Decades* is a reverse-chronological trawl through the Finnish symphonic metal behemoth's catalogue, released to celebrate their 20th anniversary. All the better to trace their trajectory right back to the beginning, and 1996's self-titled demo, through all the line-up changes, shed vocalists and shifts of emphasis. Nightwish majordomo Tuomas Holopainen formed the band based on a desire to play "atmospheric acoustic music led by a female voice", but that hardly does justice to the increased focus evinced during their career on bombastic orchestral sonics and neo-operatic acrobatics.

There are tracks here from their eight albums. Just don't expect bonus or unreleased ones - "for the simple reason that we don't have any," deadpans Holopainen, who can be melodramatic, too: he compares leaving songs off the comp to "kill[ing] your darlings".

If that overwrought, histrionic tone appeals, then you'll love *Decades*, especially the 24-minute *The Greatest Show On Earth*, which starts thunderously florid and goes from there, Celtic interludes, artillery fire, angelic chorale, Richard Dawkins narration and all. But they can also be concisely tuneful: *Storytime* is (no joke) like a symphonic metal ABBA.

Prepare to *Shudder Before The Beautiful*, as the title track of Nightwish's 2015 album would have it, although that particular murdered loved one isn't included here.

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Paul Lester

Peter French

Ducks In Flight *REPERTOIRE*

Polished late-70s mainstream hard rock.

Renowned for fronting both Leafhound and Atomic Rooster, with this 1978 solo album Peter French took the somewhat surprising step of eschewing the heavy underground trademarks of both these bands and going for a more commercial approach. And it worked.

There are influences from the likes of Bad Company, The Faces and Thin Lizzy here, on songs which are sharp with real melodic attitude. Moreover, French brought in a battery of highly proficient musicians to help out. From guitarists Brian Robertson and Micky Moody to drummers Henry Spinetti and Kenney Jones and keyboard player Tim Hinkley, the line-up

gives the album a genuine feel of being a bunch of pals having fun, and in the process making a coherent sound.

From the funk-fuelled opener *Slipped And Stumbled*, almost everything here has an upbeat momentum, with *Shame, Shame, Schoolday* and *Hold Me Take Me* having a swagger that even Rod Stewart would envy. Only on the rather mundane *Without You* does the pace slacken. Otherwise this is a purposeful success. The pity is that it's French's sole solo album.

Malcolm Dome

Jethro Tull

Heavy Horses: New Shoes Edition PARLOPHONE

The second instalment of Tull's folk trilogy, lavishly and lovingly rebooted.

By 1978, Jethro Tull were still a formidable commercial presence on both sides of the Atlantic, but the glory days which spawned this most British of band's two chart-topping US albums were beginning to fade. The previous year's *Songs From The Wood* would be their final US Top 10 album. That record, the first in a 'folk trilogy', was a retreat into classically tinged rusticism which complemented the recently married frontman Ian Anderson's move to a farmhouse in Buckinghamshire.

The follow-up, *Heavy Horses*, a lament for a disappearing rural world, was tougher but more sentimental. Liberated by returning to the music which had inspired Tull's 1969 album *Stand Up*, there was a gentleness of touch, a clutch of soaring melodies, a shedding of the frenetic bombast which had served them so well and a yearning sense of Britishness so acute that *Journeyman* could speak wistfully of being '*too late to stop for tea at Gerrards Cross*'. The lengthy title suite – there were bells – was the sound of a band playing to their many strengths and, when Curved Air's violin player Darryl Way guested, finding new ones.

This exhaustive reissue sprawls across three CDs and includes a Steven Wilson remix of the original, "associated recordings" and a 1978 concert in Berne. The whole package is also available as two DVDs, with the addition of TV ads for the *Bursting Out* live album and music videos which, as disco and punk raged around him, featured Anderson smoking roll-ups (*Moths*) and wearing wellington boots (*Heavy Horses*). What a gloriously contrary pop star he was.

John Aizlewood

Riot

Fire Down Under

ROCK CANDY

All Riot now!

To say that Riot endured bad breaks is akin to suggesting that Oliver Reed occasionally partook of a swift half. The band's fortunes appeared to improve in 1981, with a slot on the inaugural Monsters Of Rock festival, a new record deal with Elektra and the consistently brilliant *Fire Down Under* album. But later that same year vocalist Guy Speranza bowed out, and despite strong releases from later line-ups something unique was lost.

The internet offers abundant fan testimonials to *Fire Down Under*'s enduring cult-classic appeal, founded on the quality of its songs and delivery rather than because of misty-eyed nostalgia; the breadth of material takes in proto-speed metallers (*Swords And Tequila* and the title track), a melodic slap round the chops (*Outlaw*), Lizzy-style swing (*Altar Of The King*) and hints of Aerosmith (in the riffs of *Feel The Same* and *Don't Bring Me Down*), all rammed home with Riot's singular combination of energy, melody and power.

Despite previous reissues, this one edges out in front, due to having been freshly mastered in high definition from original tapes and with the addition of superior bonus tracks.

Rich Davenport

Sweet

The Polydor Albums

CAROLINE

Whatever happened to the teenage rampagers? This four-CD box set finds out.

It appeared the hits had dried up by the time Sweet, post-Chinnichap, signed to Polydor Records in 1978. Unsure whether they were committing to hard rock or keeping one foot in pop, they found the, er, sweet spot with *Love Is Like Oxygen*, a single edited from the baroque seven-minute album version.

Its parent album, *Level Headed*, which made inspired forays into strings and art-rock, was the last the band recorded with singer Brian Connolly, whose alcoholism wasn't funny any more.

Cut Above The Rest, with Steve Priest and Andy Scott tackling vocals, again flits indecisively between styles. Yet that's somehow the beauty of it, as on the godawful yet glorious *Discophony*, which declares: '*Disco ain't worth your masturbating/ Rock'n'roll will keep accelerating*'.

By rights, *Water's Edge* should be a wash-out, but their knack of making the tacky transcendent again births miracles like the harmonies on *Own Up*.

1982's knowingly titled *Identity Crisis* really was the last knockings. Serious rock fans will consider it a minor release. For the rest of us it's an utterly fascinating gold mine and time capsule, as a 70s giant flails to replace its frontman and enter the 80s, sometimes prat-falling, sometimes… accelerating.

Chris Roberts

Spirit

It Shall Be – The Ode & Epic Recordings 1968-1972 ESOTERIC

Innovative and genre-bending West Coast psych-rockers get boxed.

The teenage Randy Wolfe must have had an inkling he wasn't destined to have the luckiest of careers from the moment Jimi Hendrix told him that he would henceforth be known as Randy California. I mean, your name is Randy Wolfe and that's not considered unequivocally ideal for a rock guitarist? When Hendrix left Jimmy James And The Blue Flames for England, Randy's parents insisted he reject the offer to go along, and instead finish school.

At 16 he bounced back, joining Spirit, and the rest is the best kind of rock history – a band of flickering genius, drug-fuelled despair and scant commercial success who can lay claim to own the patent on words like 'legendary' and 'cult'. As bassist Mark Andes has said: "Our reputation as an idiosyncratic psychedelic jazz group meant we were influential rather than successful".

This five-CD box set gathers everything Spirit released in their pomp: their first five albums, plus the soundtrack to the 1968 film *The Model Shop*. There are also out-takes, demos and alternative mixes from 1991's *Time Circle* compilation.

Spirit aficionados won't need telling just how boldly the band warped the West Coast sound of the era, with Ed Cassidy – drummer and Randy California's stepdad – having played with jazzers Art Pepper and Roland Kirk, and keyboard player John Locke the son of an opera singer. To newer ears they'll seem like Love with (even) more interesting tangents, or The Doors with a lighter, less self-regarding touch. California didn't write much at first, but his guitar playing always darted ahead of expectations.

Right from 1968's self-titled debut album they're left of centre, jagged on the track *Fresh Garbage*, tuneful on *Topanga Windows*. Following that, *The Family That Plays Together* gets a line on bringing their strands into a whole; *Clear* (using some ideas from the film soundtrack) is patchy and rushed (although *Cold Wind* is a beauty). It's 1970's *Twelve Dreams Of Dr. Sardonicus* where, produced by Neil Young's ally David Briggs, they coalesce into a platonic ideal of psychedelic rock, with songwriting and sound marrying into magic. Fall-outs ensued, but this was their pinnacle, a rival to Love's *Forever Changes* and now a capricious classic.

Chris Roberts

GETTY

GETTY

Warren Zevon

Despite having few hits and hardly being a household name, the late American singer-songwriter left a remarkable catalogue.

Warren Zevon died as he had lived: fearlessly. After being diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2002, he refused to wallow in depression or self-pity. Instead this most mercurial of musicians released a final, valedictory album, *The Wind*, and embarked on a series of interviews in which he treated his impending demise as a source of black comedy and philosophical rumination.

But then Zevon was never your typical singer-songwriter. Born in Chicago but coming of age in 60s Los Angeles, he could easily have carved out a successful career as a straight-down-the-line piano man like Elton John or Billy Joel, were it not for his caustic wit, chemical-induced instability and general contempt for the world. He gravitated towards life's losers, underdogs and addicts, maybe because he saw something of himself in them. "I'm insane. I'm fucked up. I have problems," he told one interviewer. "But I don't get depressed and I don't get bored."

Zevon's career was anything but predictable. His underwhelming 1969 debut album, *Wanted Dead Or Alive*, proved to be a false start, and it would be another seven years before he released a follow-up. The 1978 single *Werewolves Of London* propelled him to fame, but it remained his sole hit. The 80s and 90s were equally erratic, commercially and personally, and although in the early 00s he underwent a mini-renaissance, it was soon cut terminally short.

By all accounts, Zevon wasn't an easy man to be around. He was vain and combustible, egotistical and petty. But he was also charismatic, funny and more often than not the smartest guy in the room. His magnetic personality attracted an astonishing array of collaborators over the years: Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, David Gilmour and R.E.M. were just a few of the people who worked with him.

Zevon never made a 'perfect' album. But perfection was never the point; he was the rare artist who was defined as much by his flaws as by his successes, and it was those flaws that made him so fascinating.

Zevon died in 2003, aged 56. He was never big enough and far too inconsistent to qualify for 'American National Treasure' status, although he'd probably bristle at the suggestion that he was a cult artist. The best description of Warren Zevon is that he was just Warren Zevon.

Dave Everley

Essential Classics

Warren Zevon

ASYLUM, 1976

Zevon's first proper album, at least in his reckoning, and the closest he came to a stone-cold classic. Roping in a bunch A-list muso buddies (Jackson Browne, Don Henley and Glenn Frey, Mick Fleetwood. Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks), he served up one of the great LA records.

His connections with the early-70s Laurel Canyon 'mellow mafia' are evident on *Hasten Down The Wind* and *Desperados Under The Eaves*, but the outlaw myth-making of *Frank And Jesse James* and the S&M-themed *Poor Poor Pitiful Me* had teeth and weren't afraid to bare them. Best of all is the country ballad *Carmelita*, one of the finest junkies' laments ever written.

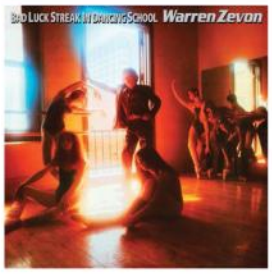
Excitable Boy

ASYLUM, 1978

Zevon's third album was his breakthrough, thanks to *Werewolves Of London*. With its nagging piano hook, wolverine 'Ow-oohs' and surreal images of lycanthropes stalking Soho, it was an unlikely hit single on both sides of the Atlantic.

That song isn't even the best thing on *Excitable Boy*. The anthemic *Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner* is a surreal critique of US foreign policy disguised as the tale of a ghostly mercenary hell-bent on revenge, while *Lawyers, Guns And Money* paints a gonzo picture of Zevon holed up in some South American hellhole. On the stark ballad *Accidentally Like A Martyr*, he even reigns in the snarkiness.

Superior Reputation cementing



Bad Luck Streak In Dancing School

ASYLUM, 1980

With hindsight, the success of *Excitable Boy* was a fluke. Certainly the follow-up didn't have the same impact. It was nowhere near as consistent, while matters weren't helped by the dated synthesisers Zevon insisted on slathering all over the album, undercutting the ironically macho *Jungle Work* and ruining *Gorilla You're A Desperado*.

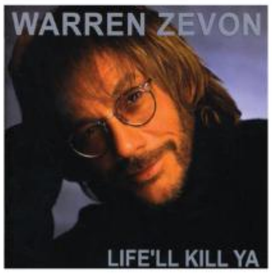
But *BLSIDS* also features some of his finest songs. *Play It All Night Long* pours scorn on Lynyrd Skynyrd and their fans, and *Jeannie Needs A Shooter* (a title borrowed from an unreleased Springsteen song) is noir fiction set to a lush musical backdrop.

Sentimental Hygiene

VIRGIN, 1987

Zevon spent the mid-80s recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. With R.E.M. as his backing band, this comeback album was tougher and more guitar-centric than anything he'd made before.

Boom Boom Mancini, inspired by a real-life boxing match that ended in tragedy, is as pugilistic as its subject matter, while *The Factory* could have been a Tom Petty number were it not for the scabrous irony. *Detox Mansion* casts a jaundiced eye over rehab culture, and the raucous *Even A Dog Can Shake Hands* sticks the knife into the music industry with venomous glee.



Life'll Kill Ya

ARTEMIS, 2000

The 1990s knocked some humility into Zevon. When he returned after another long break, the old brattiness had been supplanted by the wisdom of age.

That's not to say the stripped-back *Life'll Kill Ya*, a semi-concept album revolving around mortality, wasn't funny or toothless. Two of its tracks stand among his best. A stark take on Steve Winwood's *Back In The High Life Again* ditches the original's 80s gloss, although its winking irony can't hide the bleakness at its core. Even better is *My Shit's Fucked Up*, a droll memento mori in which Zevon nailed the absurdity of death. Two years later, it didn't seem so droll any more.

The Wind

ARTEMIS, 2003

When Zevon was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer, he could have given up the ghost there and then. Instead he got a bunch of famous friends (Springsteen, Petty, Billy Bob Thornton) to help him record a farewell album. And it stands among his best.

The shadow of death may hang over *The Wind*, but *Dirty Life And Times* and *Disorder In The House* are the sound of a man going out kicking. Still, it's hard not to be moved by his cover of *Knockin' On Heaven's Door* and album closer *Keep Me In Your Heart*.

Two weeks after its release, Zevon was dead, leaving this as the perfect valediction.

Good Worth exploring

The Envoy

ASYLUM, 1982

Zevon's fifth album was his most direct yet, casting a jaundiced eye over the Middle East crisis on the title track and flooring the pedal on raucous rock'n'roll road anthem *The Overdraft*.

Those infernal keyboards stink the place up once again on *Ain't That Pretty At All*, but the hushed Elvis Presley tribute *Jesus Mentioned* and hilariously self-pitying cuckold's tale *Hula Hula Boys* are worth the price of entry alone.

If Zevon hoped this record would give him a much-needed hit, he was out of luck. *The Envoy* flopped, and he embarked on a drug and booze bender that put him out of action for the next five years.

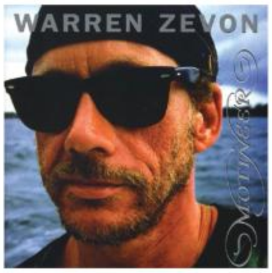
Transverse City

VIRGIN, 1989

Zevon was on a roll after his creative rebirth with *Sentimental Hygiene*, even if this, the follow up, follow-up, lacked that album's knock-out punch.

Transverse City found the singer indulging his love of sci-fi, plugging into the futurism of *Blade Runner* and William Gibson's cyberpunk novels and then-current Cold War concerns.

While the processed production instantly date-stamped it to the late 80s, a stellar line-up of guest guitarists – David Gilmour, Neil Young *and* Jerry Garcia – cut through the bullshit just at the right moments. And in *Nobody's In Love This Year*, Zevon serves up his most personal and uncynical ballad.



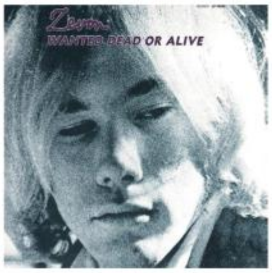
Mutineer

VIRGIN, 1995

Mutual apathy between Zevon and the general public meant he released only two studio albums during the 90s: *Mr Bad Example* (1991) and this, released four years later. Both are solid if unspectacular, possessing neither the class of his 70s work nor the focus of his 80s comeback.

Of the two, *Mutineer* edges it slightly. Recorded largely by Zevon alone in his home studio, it tamps down the more wayward edges of his past work. Opener *Seminole Bingo* and the title track are the standout numbers, bookending a set of songs that show their creator in more subdued mood than usual. The sound of an artist in a self-imposed holding pattern.

Avoid



Wanted Dead Or Alive

LIBERTY, 1969

Zevon expressed few regrets in his life, but his often overlooked debut album was one of them. Kim Fowley signed up as producer but, frustrated that the control-freak singer wanted to play all the instruments himself, quit mid-session.

Its rocky gestation was only part of the problem. A bigger issue was that Zevon couldn't work out if he wanted to be a country singer, a psychedelic bluesman or a Randy Newman-style piano man, and fell short on all three fronts. Considerably less than the sum of its parts, it was released to what Zevon called "the sound of one hand clapping" – and deservedly so.

Essential Playlist

Carmelita
Warren Zevon

Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner
Excitable Boy

Werewolves Of London
Excitable Boy

Stand In The Fire
Stand In The Fire

Jeannie Needs A Shooter
Bad Luck Streak In Dancing School

The Overdraft
The Envoy

Hula Hula Boys
The Envoy

Boom Boom Mancini
Sentimental Hygiene

Detox Mansion
Sentimental Hygiene

Transverse City
Transverse City

Mr Bad Example
Mr Bad Example

Seminole Bingo
Mutineer

Mutineer
Mutineer

Life'll Kill Ya
Life'll Kill Ya

My Shit's Fucked Up
Life'll Kill Ya

Sacrificial Lambs
My Ride's Here

Disorder In The House
The Wind

Keep Me In Your Heart
The Wind

THE HARD STUFF

STUFF

BOOKS & DVDs

American Valhalla

EAGLE ROCK

Unflinching cinematic record of rock's process in the raw.

Co-directed by photographer Andreas Neumann and Queens Of The Stone Age frontman Josh Homme, the sumptuously realised *American Valhalla* chronicles the collaboration of guitarist/MD/composer Homme with alt.rock vocal legend and lyricist Iggy Pop, from instigation, through desert-bound songwriting process, recording nascency and ultimate live celebration. As remaining band members, QOTSA guitarist Dean Fertita and Arctic Monkeys drummer Matt Helders, complete the recording line-up at Homme's Rancho De La Luna studio in the Mojave desert, Anthony Bourdain conducts a series of intimate and revealing interviews with all protagonists to reveal the inner workings, trials and triumphs associated with the creative process.

Every painstaking step is examined: the formation of relationships, the tentative courtship of the creatives; self-doubt, staring down the aging process, mercilessly slashing back lyrics to their fundamental meat. Reality bites at every turn. *American Valhalla* is remorseless in its pursuit of the unrefined truth and it looks absolutely fantastic, with breathtaking panoramic desert backdrops set in pin-sharp, stark contrast with Iggy's time-ravaged torso and quite extraordinary eyes; windows into a brink-dwelling driven soul that's courted the maelstrom from Stooges to 70 years of age.

The sessions' resultant *Post Pop Depression* album marked the artistic intersection in a Venn diagram of three sets: Iggy, QOTSA and David Bowie, for the key element of the Queens' core sound that most references Pop history has far firmer roots in *The Idiot*/*Lust For Life* Berlin collaborations than Stooges' Detroit brutality. So the timing of Bowie's death (Iggy learned of his friend's passing just an hour before taking a 4am flight to a rehearsal of material the pair recorded together in '76 and '77, for the very first time with Josh and the *PPD* touring band) seems almost unbelievably poignant.

As the studio-bonded quartet take to the road with Troy Van Leeuwen and Matt Sweeney, the unbridled passion of live Pop takes centre-stage, and the love that sparks between performer and audience has never seemed more acute.

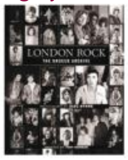
If you bore witness to this ensemble's extraordinary performance at the Royal Albert Hall in 2016 (available as *Post Pop Depression: Live*) you'll certainly want to witness the inspirational journey that preceded what's arguably the most compelling live show of the third millennium so far.

Ian Fortnam

London Rock: The Unseen Archives

Alec Byrne VIRGIN

Vintage snapper's priceless legacy curated.



Ah, charisma, that most elusive of all qualities, has it ever been in shorter supply? It would appear not. Then again, we're a tough audience; a rock generation long since spoiled by a surfeit of the stuff, rendered immune to any given starlet that sparkles short of a Bowie. A single glance between these reassuringly substantial pages is evidence enough to suggest that Alec Byrne is more than partially responsible for our predicament, because his (largely monochrome) portraits of 60s and 70s rock royalty often serve to define the term precisely. The Who, Kinks, Bowie, Bolan, Hendrix, Beatles and Stones are all here, looking almost supernaturally 'cool', before the word was hijacked by dullards and rendered meaningless.

An *NME* photographer from '66 (when just 17), Byrne had an intuitive eye for an image, and often reached beneath the surface to capture the story within. There's a 1967 shot of The Yardbirds here, where Jimmy Page's steady front-and-centre gaze of entitlement – as Keith Relf struggles to peer into shot from the rear – foretells the near future with a crystal clarity. 50 quid, but a thing of rare beauty.

Ian Fortnam

Lure, Burke, Stinson, Kramer

L.A.M.F. Live At The Bowery Electric JUNGLE

Back to the Bowery.

In seismic 1977, the Heartbreakers were the most exciting pure rock'n'roll band on the planet and, even if it took years to gain its rightful mix, their sole album *L.A.M.F.* remains the degenerate classic from the New York streets that spawned them.

In November 2016, NYC troubadour Jesse Malin enticed the last Heartbreaker standing (now retired stockbroker) Walter Lure to perform a start-to-finish celebration of the album at the Bowery's latest favourite venue. Three sold-out shows whooped for a supergroup featuring Lure alongside ageless Blondie powerhouse Clem Burke, MC5 guitarist/Johnny Thunders' Gang War buddy Wayne Kramer and Replacements/Guns N' Roses bassist Tommy Stinson, who takes most vocals, although Malin, Kramer and Burke get their shot, joined by former Dead Boy Cheetah Chrome on two.

Ragged and sober but unfeasibly energised, it's a fitting tribute to a long-gone time and NY landmark.

Kris Needs

The Yacht Rock Book

Greg Prato JAWBONE

Sail on, sailors: first-hand tale of soft rock's golden age.

To paraphrase legendary rock critic 'Hollywood' Steve Huey, in the mid to late 70s a group of (mostly) Californian artists docked a remarkable fleet of hits. This fascinating oral history – the result of a resurgence in interest inspired by the cult YouTube series *Yacht Rock* – tells their story.

Of course, not everyone will be interested in the making of Rupert Holmes' *Escape* or the Captain & Tenille's marital woes. But an impressive raft of interviewees – Walter Becker, John Oates, Christopher Cross – and clever editing ensures that Prato skillfully charts yacht rock's voyage through pop, prior to being spectacularly capsized by the punk tidal wave.

Paul Moody

Still Competition – The Listener's Guide To Cheap Trick

Robert Lawson FRIESEN PRESS

Highest fidelity Trick.

This dissection of Cheap Trick's discography goes beyond forensic – the handclaps on the *Oh Candy* single that do not appear on the album version, the misspelling of *Lookout* as two separate words on the sleeve of *At Budokan* although it appears correctly on the record label, the unusual frequency with which Tom Petersson changed bass during their Reading Festival appearance in 1979.

There are some genuine revelations here: the first CD release of *At Budokan*, the band's definitive album, that used pre-production tapes is a staggering

example of record company sloppiness. However, unless your girlfriend is prone to waking at night in a cold sweat, desperately wanting to know what happened to the missing handclaps, some of the nuggets have a limited value.

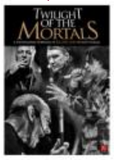
A glimpse of the band's individual characters might have been able to answer the biggest question of all – when did drummer Bun E Carlos cease his prodigious cigarette habit?

Hugh Fielder

Twilight Of The Mortals

Mont Sherar PC PRESS

Boxed volume of Killing Joke at work, rest and play.



If you're going to embark upon a near decade-long quest to deliver a 'photographic portrayal' of a band, you'd better make sure that your subjects are characterful and compelling. Luckily, Canadian photographer Mont Sherar chose the gentlemen of Killing Joke. Collectively eternally enigmatic, charismatic, monolithic juggernauts of apocalyptic post-punk and individually four, brooding, totemic visionaries who've not only operated behind a captivating veil of mystery and majick for the last four decades, but who also boast well-chiselled, weather-hewn chops that lend themselves extremely well to moody black and white.

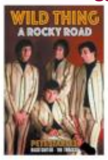
Twilight Of The Mortals doesn't waste its opportunity, with rare glimpses on, off and behind the stage. The accompanying text's tendency toward mock-heroism is often superfluous here, with the photographic studies telling the story more succinctly than words ever could. In fact, a single shot of Geordie Walker's 1952 golden-cello Gibson ES-295 says more about the transcendent majesty of rock than an entire U2 gallery show.

Ian Fortnam

Wild Thing: A Rocky Road

Pete Staples NEW HAVEN

On the Trogg.



Although Troggs bassist Pete Staples was sacked the year before 1970's infamous *Troggs Tapes* cemented the band's "brickies-turned-pop stars" image, his memoir is unwittingly bathed in similarly naïve country logic (expletives detailed).

Rich in rural working-class roots and tour japes but low on jaw-hanging insights beyond late singer Reg Presley being a sneakily rich "arsehole" who betrays him to his face, Staples takes the barroom bard approach to revisit that time when bands were hyped to stardom, sent on merciless tours, ripped off by predatory managers and recorded on the fly; for the Troggs, producing hits from *Wild Thing* to *Love Is All Around* (most mentioned briefly before the next fart-lighting or red-faced trouser escapade).

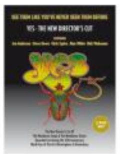
Staples' crudely-edited tale predominantly favours a light-hearted approach, only mentioning *The Tapes* that clinched immortality (and influenced Spinal Tap) to illustrate the band's tendency to swear. Best read in an Andover accent with sporadically-inserted "Oi shit 'em".

Kris Needs

Yes

Wonderous Songs & Wonderous Stories: The New Director's Cut SFM

A brace of birthday celebrations.



Curiously not featuring the song mentioned in its title, this double disc set contains two full shows from the group's 35th anniversary tour of 2003 (Glastonbury, Birmingham), short excerpts having previously been used throughout the 2004's year's *Yesspeak* documentary. Absent hit singles aside, there are outings for most of the band's biggies, plus a solo interlude where Rick Wakeman revisits his *Six Wives* concept piece.

Wakeman's presence marks the first time the "classic" line-up (completed by Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, Chris Squire and Alan White) had performed together since 1978's *Tormato*, although intuitive readings of *Long Distance Runaround*, *All Good People* and *Roundabout* make it seem they've barely spent a fortnight apart. Anderson, alert to the rigours of ageing, wisely sidesteps some of the higher notes, while paradoxically there's a richer element to Howe's guitar playing; less showy but just as impressive.

Terry Staunton

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PLANET ROCK

LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

P116

Xander And The Peace Pirates

Was it daylight robbery with a show-stealing set at the Great British Rock & Blues Festival?

P110 Interviews
P113 Tour Dates
P116 Live Reviews

KEVIN NIXON

"Chris [Squire] said: 'Whatever you do, please keep the band going.' We are maintaining his legacy."

Yes

Yes have turned 50. You are cordially invited to a party at the Palladium.

Long-serving Yes drummer Alan White previews the band's 50th-anniversary celebrations, which include 10-dates in the UK and a fan convention that precedes its final stop at the Palladium in London.

Is it true that Chris Squire and Jon Anderson threatened to throw you out of a third-floor window unless you joined Yes?
They did. I was sharing an apartment with Eddy Offord [producer], and I played with Yes when Bill Bruford left. A few days later Chris and Jon came by and said I'd done really well – and if I didn't join that's what they'd do. And here I am forty-six years later.

In 2016 you sat out some American dates due to ill health. Is that all fixed now?
Not completely. I had back surgery. It takes quite a while to get over, but I'm feeling okay.

Have Yes ever performed at the London Palladium before?
I've played there, but I don't think Yes have, unless it was before I joined. I played there with a very early band of mine in a talent competition, which we won. The judges were Brian Epstein and Cilla Black. It's a beautiful venue and I can't wait to return. I always used to watch *Sunday Night At The London Palladium* on TV.

Sponsored by *CR*'s sister title *Prog*, the anniversary celebrations in London include a Yes Fan Convention, a display of memorabilia and the tribute bands SeYeS and Fragile.
We [the band] are all planning to be there. There will be a Q&A session. It will be a lot of fun.

Jon Anderson once called you the "mediator of Yes".
That's true. But it's not so necessary today. In bands there should be a yin and a yang; somebody wants something and someone else has a different opinion. I was the guy that helped to find common ground. Those disputes happen less and less now.

Did you enjoy Yes's induction to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame last year?
Yeah, that was great. There were so many great bands there, and of course Geddy Lee helped out by playing with us in Chris Squire's place. I thought we played [*Roundabout*] really well, considering [the circumstances]. I enjoyed hanging out with the other bands there [the Class Of 2017 also included Journey, ELO and Pearl Jam] that I hadn't seen for quite a while.

At the fiftieth-birthday shows in London are there plans to feature any former band members as special guests?
Ah, well… it's a possibility, certainly. There may be a couple or more. We'll have to see – it's meant to be a surprise.

Jon, Rick Wakeman and Trevor Rabin performed again with Yes at the Hall Of Fame ceremony. Given the fact that the three of them have their own rival band, which now bills itself as Yes, it's probably pointless to ask whether they could be a part of these celebrations?
[Laughing] I would doubt it. Unless we invite them, I guess. I'd be fine with that, but [voice trails off]…

It was a cheeky question, obviously. There's some baggage there.
Just a bit [laughs].

Asked in a recent interview about the possibility of new music from Yes, guitarist Steve Howe was very cagey indeed. He hinted that new material may exist but, possibly being mindful of Chris Squire's loss, he refused to be drawn on the likelihood of it being heard.
Everybody in the band has been working on ideas for songs with a view to releasing them further down the line. I'm keeping an open mind about it. That's really all I can say at the moment but, sure, it's not impossible.

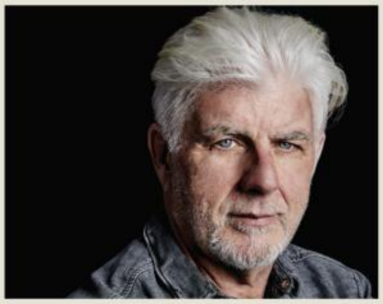
What would you say to those who believe that Yes shouldn't continue without Chris Squire in the band?
One of the last things that Chris said to me before he died was: "Whatever you do, please keep the band going." And that's what I'm doing. We are carrying on and maintaining his legacy. **DL**

The tour begins in Bristol on March 13.

YES-TERDAY AND TODAY

- Yes's current line-up is Steve Howe, Alan White, Geoff Downes, Billy Sherwood and Jon Davison.
- So far the group have had 19 full-time members.
- Their catalogue includes 21 studio albums.

YES: GLENN GOTTLIEB/PRESS



Michael McDonald

The silver fox of yacht rock lays himself *Wide Open*.

In a career of more than 45 years, the five-times Grammy-winning American vocalist has notched solo hits and worked with Steely Dan and the Doobie Brothers, among others. His new album, *Wide Open*, is his first of original material in 17 years.

How do you look back on those early days with Steely Dan?
With great affection, so the death of Walter [Becker] blind-sided me. After a year of what was really intense therapy, I had thought that things were looking up for him again.

Donald Fagen and Walter could be brutal taskmasters in the studio. Did you have any experience of that?
Most of the musicians they worked with took that stuff on the chin because they were also very funny. And yeah, there were times when I didn't pass muster so they used somebody else, because they were striving to do something very special.

You've had reunions with the Doobies. Could you re-join them again?
I don't think that's really on the table, no. They sound better than ever. They don't need to make adjustments of any kind.

Michael Jackson once claimed to have sung backing vocals on the Doobies' hit *What A Fool Believes*.
Yeah, I've heard that. But Michael was probably pulling an interviewer's chain. My guess is that it was Elizabeth Taylor.

***Wide Open* features guest appearances from Warren Haynes, Robben Ford and Marcus Miller, among others. Who else remains on your wish-list?**
There are so many, especially the ones in New Orleans or Memphis. So what I'd really like to do is go to a particular city and make a record there with a pool of musicians who are significant in that area – maybe the Neville Brothers in New Orleans.

What do you make of the term 'yacht rock' that gets applied to music like yours?
You're yacht or you're not, right [laughs]. Hey, so long as someone puts the stylus down on one of my records I don't care what they call me. **DL**

McDonald plays UK shows on March 12, 13 and 15.

MICHAEL McDONALD: TIMOTHY WHITE/PRESS

Skid Row

They're no longer youths, but they're still capable of going wild.

With the New Jersey band about to undertake a 17-date tour of the UK and Ireland, bassist Rachel Bolan talks about their latest singer, ex-DragonForce man ZP Theart, and reveals why reuniting with Sebastian Bach is "a dead issue".

After quite a few years away this is a long run of shows.
Yeah. It's our first visit with ZP so we're very excited. The dynamic of the band is so positive right now, he brings so many good things to us.

Skid Row were ZP's favourite band when he was a kid.
Yeah. He grew up in South Africa and told us that Bon Jovi were his first favourites, but then we came out and everything changed; he started to smoke cigarettes and drink beer [laughs].

Skid Row had a very short spell with former TNT singer Tony Harnell. Why did that end?
Tony and us was just a bad combo. It just didn't work out. So… enter ZP, and everything works.

Is there a plan to record a new album with Theart?
Yes, absolutely. There will be a third volume of the *United World Rebellion* series and it'll be a full-length record.

You must have great memories of that 1980s period, which was capped by headlining Hammersmith Odeon, complete with cameos from Lemmy and Steve Harris?
It was very cool. After that Hammersmith gig, Lemmy gave us the greatest compliment ever by saying he hadn't been impressed by a show that much since he saw the MC5. And we all know how much Lemmy loved the MC5. Recounting that again now I'm getting a chill, it blows my mind.

"Lemmy told us he hadn't been as impressed by a live show since he saw the MC5."

When the band's second album, 1991's *Slave To The Grind*, entered the US chart at No.1 – the first metal album to do so – Skid Row looked unstoppable.
It must have looked like it, but being inside the situation was like watching it happen to somebody else on TV.

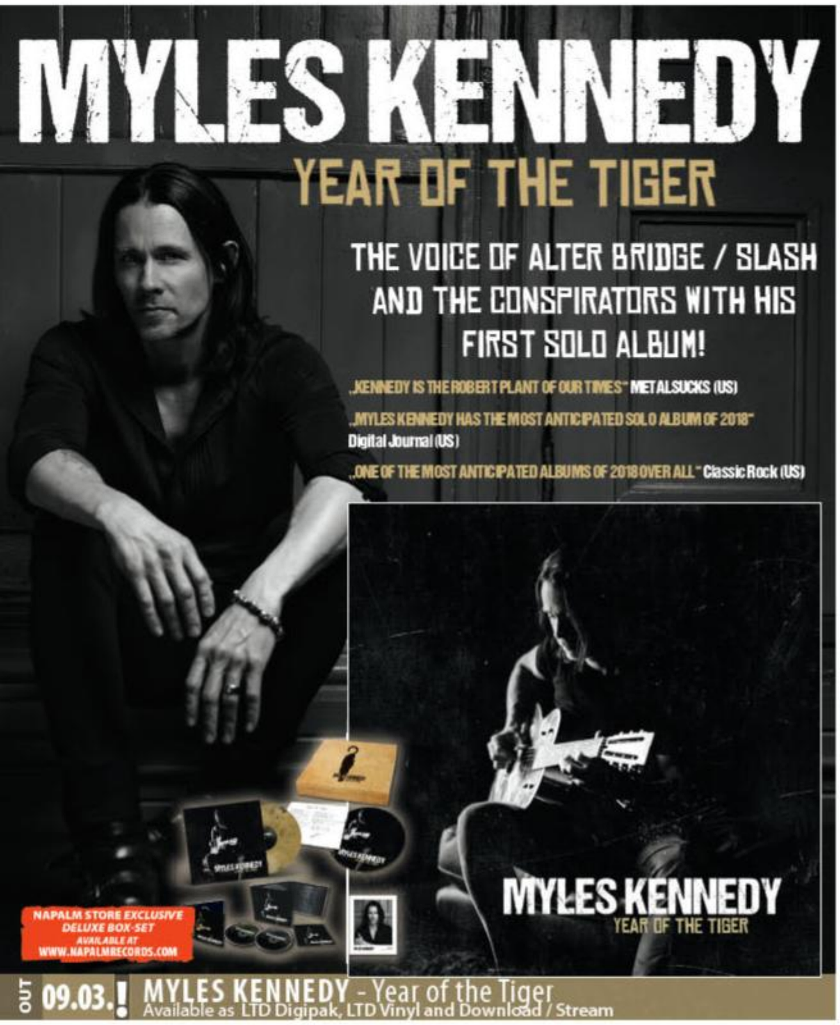
How hard to take was it when everything ground to a halt?
It was difficult but at the same time it was also a relief. When things [the band's internal chemistry] are so wrong for so long, I pretty much wanted it over.

A couple of years ago Sebastian Bach pushed quite hard to re-join Skid Row. Has there been any further actual dialogue between the two parties?
Well, we did consider to consider to consider getting back with him [laughs]. Our managers spoke, and very quickly everything went horribly wrong. Within days it was as stressful and volatile as it had ever been. Okay, we'd have made a ton of money, but we already did that. Right now happiness is the main concern.

With so many musicians passing on, does a small part of you want to reunite with Seb for the sake of closure?
I've had my closure. It was the day that Snake [Sabo], Scotti [Hill] and myself decided that the reunion is a dead issue. If it happened, it might kill us all!

Besides having regular support acts Toseland and Bad Touch, Night Ranger are co-headliners on your London date. Are the two bands friendly?
Yeah, we're very much rock'n'roll buddies. Buy a ticket and we'll give you hits, melodies and screaming guitars. We're all in our late forties or early fifties but it's still a high-energy show. **DL**

The tour commences in Glasgow on March 5.



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Tour Dates

BRYAN ADAMS

Manchester	Arena	May 24
Birmingham	Genting Arena	May 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	May 26
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 27
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	May 29
London	Wembley Arena	May 30
London	O2 Arena	May 31

THE ALARM

Glasgow	ABC	May 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 26

IAN ANDERSON & JETHRO TULL

Manchester	Apollo	Apr 3
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 5
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 6
Liverpool	Auditorium	Apr 7
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 9
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 10
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 11
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 17

A NEW DAY FESTIVAL
HAWKWIND, CARAVAN, GONG, CARL PALMER, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 3-5

A PERFECT CIRCLE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 12
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 13

APOCALYPTICA

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 1
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 2
Glasgow	ABC	Mar 3

AT THE DRIVE IN, DEATH FROM ABOVE, LE BUTCHERETTES

London	Brixton Academy	Mar 9
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 10
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 12
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 13
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 15

BATH FESTIVAL
ROBERT PLANT, TEARS FOR FEARS, MORE

Bath	Recreational Showground	May 26, 27

BLAZE BAYLEY

Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 1
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Mar 2
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 3
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 4
Carlisle	Embers	May 8
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 9
Pwllheli	Hammerfest	Mar 16

BEARDED THEORY FESTIVAL
ROBERT PLANT, JESUS & MARY CHAIN, THERAPY?, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Hall	May 24-27

THE BELLRAYS

Ramsgate	Music Hall	Mar 1
Halifax	The Lantern	Mar 2
Middlesbrough	Westgarth Social Club	Mar 3
Edinburgh	Opium	Mar 4
Glasgow	Broadcast	Mar 6
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Mar 8
Manchester	Soup Kitchen	Mar 9
Newport	Le Pub	Mar 10
Southampton	Talking Heads	Mar 13
Bristol	Lantern	Mar 14
Brighton	The Albert	Mar 15
Norwich	NAC	Mar 16
London	Camden Assembly	Mar 17

BIG BIG TRAIN, BEATRIX PLAYERS

Basingstoke	The Anvil	Jul 11

BLACK LABEL SOCIETY

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 5
Dublin	Tivoli	Apr 7
Belfast	Limelight	Apr 8

THE BLASTERS

London	Chelsea Under The Bride	Apr 29

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
JUDAS PRIEST, NIGHTWISH, MR. BIG, DORO, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 9-12

BLUE OCTOBER

Manchester	Ritz	Mar 16
Glasgow	ABC	Mar 17
Leeds	Church	Mar 18
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 20
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 21
Bristol	Academy	Mar 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 23
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 24

BLUES ON THE FARM
KING KING, NINE BELOW ZERO, MARTIN BARRE'S BLUES BAND, MORE

Canterbury	Woolton Farm	Jun 15-17

JOE BONAMASSA

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 9
Manchester	Arena	Mar 10
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Mar 11
Aberdeen	GE Oil & Gas Centre	Mar 13
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 14
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Mar 16
Brighton	Centre	Mar 17
London	Hampton Court Palace	Jun 12

THE BREEDERS

Dublin	Vicar Street	May 27
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	May 28
Leeds	Stylus	May 29
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 30
Bristol	Academy	Jul 10
Birmingham	Institute	Jul 11
Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 13

Recommended

BRITROCK MUST BE DESTROYED!
REEF, THE WILDHEARTS, TERRORVISION

Manchester	Academy	May 4
Birmingham	Digbeth Arena	May 5
London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 6
Glasgow	Academy	May 19
Newcastle	Academy	May 20
Leeds	Academy	May 24
Bristol	Motion	May 25
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 26

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Bristol	Academy	May 7
Brighton	Concorde 2	May 8
Birmingham	Academy 2	May 9
London	Camden Koko	May 11
Manchester	The Ritz	May 12
Glasgow	ABC	May 13

DANNY BRYANT

Bilston	Robin 2	May 7
Cambridge	Junction	May 8
London	Islington Bar Academy	May 9
Aberdeen	Tunnels	May 10
Derby	Flowerpot	May 11
St Helens	Citadel	May 12
Bishops Cleeve	Tithe Barn	May 13
Norwich	Waterfront	Jun 7
Fleet	The Harlington	Jun 8
Narberth	Queens Hall	Jun 9
Tavistock	Wharf	Jun 10
Dublin	Whelan's	Jun 12
Belfast	Empire	Jun 13
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Jun 14
Cleethorpes	Blues Festival	Jun 16
Stamford	Blues Festival	Jun 17

BULLETBOYS

Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Mar 9
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 18
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Mar 11
Evesham	Iron Road	Mar 14
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 16
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 18

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS, PATTI SMITH, MORE

London	Victoria Park All Points East Festival	Jun 3

ERIC CLAPTON, SANTANA, STEVE WINWOOD, MORE

London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 8

CLEETHORPES BLUES, RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
GROUNDHOGS, PAUL LAMB & THE KING SNAKES, MORE

Cleethorpes	Moon On The Water	Jun 16

JOHN COGHLAN'S QUO

Cardiff	The Globe	Apr 7
London	Putney Half Moon	Apr 20

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

THE BELLRAYS

The force of nature that is vocalist Lisa Kekaula fronts these punk-infused soul rockers. Fasten your seat belt…

See below for dates, currently March 1 to 17.

ALISON CLARKE

Morecambe	The Platform	May 25
Wavendon	The Stables	Jun 9
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jun 23
Marlborough	Manton Fest	Jun 30
Hook Norton	Music At The Crossroads	Jul 7

CURVED AIR

Scarborough	Market Hall	Mar 1
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 2
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 3
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Mar 4

THE DEAD DAISIES, THE TREATMENT, THE AMORETTES

Glasgow	Garage	Apr 8
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 9
London	Camden Koko	Apr 10
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 14
Bristol	Academy	Apr 14

DEF LEPPARD, CHEAP TRICK

Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 1
Belfast	SSE Arena	Dec 2
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 4
London	O2 Arena	Dec 6
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 8
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Dec 9
Glasgow	Hydro Arena	Dec 11
Manchester	Arena	Dec 12
Sheffield	FlyDSA Arena	Dec 14
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Dec 15
Birmingham	Arena	Dec 17
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 18

DESERTFEST
MONSTER MAGNET, NAPALM DEATH, GRAVEYARD, MORE

London	Various venues	May 4-6

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
OZZY OSBOURNE, GUNS N' ROSES, AVENGED SEVENFOLD, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 8-10

ENUFF Z'NUFF

Bradford	Trash	Mar 9
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Mar 10
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Mar 11
Evesham	Iron Road	Mar 14
Edingurgh	Bannerman's	Mar 15
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 16
Lancashire	The Waterloo	Mar 17
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 18
Bridgend	Hobos	Mar 19
Stafford	Eleven	Mar 20

EPICA

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 6
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 7
Bristol	Academy	Apr 8
Dublin	Tivoli	Apr 10
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 12
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 13

EUROPE, KING KING

Manchester	Academy	Sep 14
Glasgow	Barrowland	Sep 15
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 18
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 19
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 21
Portsmouth	Pyramids Centre	Sep 22
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 23
Brighton	Dome	Sep 24

EVANESCENCE

London	Royal Festival Hall	Mar 30, 31
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 2
Nottingham	Arena	Apr 3
Glasgow	Armadillo	Apr 5
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 6

BRIAN FALLON & THE HOWLING WEATHER

Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 8
Leeds	Beckett	Mar 9
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Mar 10
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 11

FEEDER

Bristol	Academy	Mar 7
Norwich	UEA	Mar 8
Manchester	Academy	Mar 10
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 11
Leeds	Academy	Mar 13
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 16
London	Brixton Academy	Mar 17

FM

Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Apr 20
Sutton-in-Ashfield	The Diamond	Apr 21
Stourbridge	River Rooms	Apr 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	May 18
Norwich	Waterfront	May 19
Glasgow	Garage	May 25
Newcastle	Academy	May 26
Manchester	The Ritz	Jun 9

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Etihad Stadium	Jun 19
London	Stadium	Jun 22, 23

FOREIGNER, JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR, JOHN PARR

Manchester	Apollo	May 12
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 15
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 16

G3
JOE SATRIANI, JOHN PETRUCCI, ULI JON ROTH

Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Apr 24
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 25
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 26
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 27
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 29
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30

ERIC GALES, QUINN SULLIVAN, GARY HOEY

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 17

RORY GALLAGHER TRIBUTE FESTIVAL
WALTER TROUT, WILKO JOHNSON, WISHBONE ASH, MORE

Co Donegal	Ballyshannon	May 31-Jun 3

LIVE!

GARBAGE

London	Brixton Academy	Sep 14

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM, THE FLATLINERS, MATTHEW RYAN

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jul 20
Dublin	Vicar Street	Jul 23
Glasgow	Barrowland	Jul 24
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 25

THE GRANDMOTHERS OF INVENTION

London	Camden Underworld	Apr 22
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 23
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Apr 24

STEVE HACKETT & ORCHESTRA

Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 3
London	Royal Festival Hall	Oct 4
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 5
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 7
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 8

RYAN HAMILTON & THE TRAITORS

Huddersfield	Parish	Mar 15
Liverpool	Shipping Forecast	Mar 16
Newcastle	Think Tank	Mar 17
Glasgow	Stereo	Mar 18
Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 20
Cardiff	Fuel	Mar 21
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Mar 22
London	King's Cross Surya	Mar 23

PETER HAMMILL

London	Queen Elizabeth Hall	Apr 20
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 24
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Apr 25
Brighton	St Luke's Church	Apr 27, 28
Bristol	The Lantern	Apr 29
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 30

HARD ROCK HELL BLUES
KING KING, BERNIE MARSDEN, PAT McMANUS, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Apr 14, 15

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
HAWKWIND, PENDRAGON, STRAWBS, MORE

Pwllheli	Hafan Y Môr Holiday Park	Nov 15-18

HARPENDEN BLUES FESTIVAL
THE PRETTY THINGS, AYNSLEY LISTER, SIMON McBRIDE, MORE

Harpenden	Public Halls	May 13

BEN HARPER & CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 3
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 6
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 7

BETH HART

Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 10
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 12
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Apr 14
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 15
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 18
Folkestone	Leas Hall	Apr 19
Cardiff	St David Hall	Apr 21
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 24
Blackpool	Opera House	Apr 26
Hull	City Hall	Apr 27
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 30
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 1
Coventry	Cathedral	Nov 3
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 4
Cheltenham	Jazz Festival	May 5

HAWKEASTER
HAWKWIND, SON OF MAN, EVIL BLIZZARD, THE FIERCE & THE DEAD AND MORE

Morecambe	Alhambra Theatre	Mar 30-Apr 1

HAWKWIND & ORCHESTRA

Salford	The Lowry	Oct 18
Leeds	Town Hall	Oct 19
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 20
London	Palladium	Nov 4, 5
Bath	Forum	Nov 24
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 25
Heavy Metal Kids		
London	Hammersmith Club	Mar 9

JON HISEMAN, CLEM CLEMPSON, MARK CLARKE

Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Apr 7
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 9
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 10

ROBYN HITCHCOCK

Manchester	Academy	May 11
London	Malet Street ULU	May 12
Witney	Fat Li's	May 15
Bristol	Louisiana	May 16

Classic Rock Recommends

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR

The Cult (pictured), Halestorm, Sons Of Apollo and Steel Panther lead this summer's ramble to Maidstone. Ramble on!

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jun 30, Jul 1

Cambridge	Unitarian Church	May 18
St Leonards	Kino-Teatr	May 19
Hull	Fruit	May 22
Liverpool	Philharmonic Music Room	May 23
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 24
Sheffield	Hubs	May 25
Morecambe	More Music	May 26
Newton Abbot	Kingkerswell Church	May 29
Ramsgate	Music Hall	May 31
Dublin	Workman's Club	Jun 1

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES
(ALICE COOPER, JOE PERRY, JOHNNY DEPP), THE DARKNESS, THE DAMNED

Birmingham	Genting Arena	Jun 16
Manchester	Arena	Jun 17
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 19
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 20

IQ

Bilston	Robin 2	May 5

IRON MAIDEN, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Jul 31
Belfast	SSE Arena	Aug 2
Aberdeen	Exhibition & Conference Centre	Aug 4
Manchester	Arena	Aug 6
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Aug 7
London	O2 Arena	Aug 10, 11

JADIS

Southampton	Talking Heads	May 3
St Helens	Citadel	May 4
London	Tufnell Park Dome	May 5

JANE LEE HOOKER

Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Apr 19
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Apr 20

LAURENCE JONES

Manchester	Band On The Wall	May 3
Leamington Spa	Zephyr Lounge	May 4
Southampton	Talking Heads	May 5
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	May 10
Nottingham	Bodega	May 11
York	Fulford Arms	May 12
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 13

Recommended

MYLES KENNEDY

Birmingham	Academy	Mar 17
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 18
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 20
Manchester	Gorilla	Mar 21
Bristol	Thekla	Mar 24
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Mar 26

KING KING

Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Apr 14
Sheffield	HRH Festival	Apr 15
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Apr 20
Darvel	Town Hall	Apr 21
Hastings	St Mary In The Castle	May 3
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	May 4

Southampton	1865	May 5
Liverpool	Epstein Theatre	May 10
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	May 11
Clitheroe	The Grand	May 12
Chester	Live Rooms	May 17
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 18
Holmfirth	Picturedome	May 19
Frome	Cheese & Grain	May 26
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 27
Bilston	Robin 2	May 31
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Jun 1
Newport	Rock 7 Blues Festival	Jun 7

LENNY KRAVITZ

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 19
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 20
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 22

SONNY LANDRETH

London	Great Portland Street 229 Club	Apr 15

LEVELLERS, GINGER WILDHEART

Buxton	Opera House	Mar 13
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Mar 14
Yeovil	Westlands	Mar 15
York	Barbican	Mar 16
Wavendon	The Stables	Mar 17
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Mar 18
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Mar 20
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 21
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Mar 22
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 23
Winchester	Cathedral	Mar 24

LINCOLN BLUES FESTIVAL
THE PRETTY THINGS, AYNSLEY LISTER, SIMON McBRIDE, MORE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	May 12

LINDISFARNE

Billingham	The Forum	Mar 3
Norwich	Epic Studios	Mar 16
Bishop's Stortford	Church Arts Centre	Mar 17
Northampton	Spinney Theatre	Mar 23
Hastings	St Mary In The Castle	Mar 24
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 25
Settle	Victoria Hall	Mar 31
Basingstoke	Haymarket	Apr 6
Horsham	The Capitol	Apr 7
Canterbury	Westgate Hall	Apr 8

CONNIE LUSH, KYLA BROX, ERJA LYYTINEN

Whitby	Pavilion Theatre	Mar 21
Coventry	Albany Theatre	Mar 22
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 23
Lincoln	Alive!	Mar 24
Durham	Gala Theatre	Mar 25
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Mar 27
Bristol	Tunnels	Mar 28
Keighley	The Octagon	Mar 29
Southport	The Atkinson	Mar 30

MACHINE HEAD

Southampton	Guildhall	May 13
Cardiff	University	May 14
Bristol	Academy	May 15
Birmingham	Academy	May 17
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 18, 19

Nottingham	Rock City	May 21
Newcastle	Academy	May 22
Glasgow	Academy	May 23
Manchester	Academy	May 25

MAGNUM

Belfast	Limelight	Mar 1
Birmingham	Town Hall	Mar 2
Preston	Guildhall	Feb 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 5
Leamington Spa	The Assembly	Mar 7
Cambridge	Junction	Mar 8
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Mar 9
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 11
Brighton	Old Market	Mar 12

MAN

London	Putney Half Moon	Sep 7

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Apr 23
Glasgow	Hydro Arena	Apr 25
Birmingham	Arena	Apr 27
Manchester	Arena	Apr 28
Llandudno	Venue Cymru Arena	May 1
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 2
London	Wembley Arena	May 4
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 5

MARILLION

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Apr 8
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 9
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 11
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 14
Brighton	Dome	Apr 16
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 17
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 19
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Apr 20
York	Barbican	Apr 22

MASSIVE WAGONS

Manchester	Rebellion	Mar 9
Swansea	Sin City	Mar 10
Nottingham	The Maze	Mar 11
Newcastle	Think Tank	Mar 16
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Mar 17
Cannock	The Station	Mar 18
London	Manette Street Borderline	Apr 6
Wakefield	Snooty Fox	Apr 7
Glasgow	Cathouse	Apr 8

MICHAEL McDONALD

Dublin	Vicar Street	Mar 11
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 13
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Mar 15

CHANTEL McGREGOR

South Shields	The Unionist	Mar 2
Corby	Raven Hall	Mar 3
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Mar 30
Louth	Riverhead Theatre	Mar 31
Southampton	Talking Heads	Apr 12
Harpenden	Public Halls	Apr 13
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	May 10
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	May 11
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	May 18
Norwich	Waterfront	May 19
Nottingham	Bodega	Jun 1
Bilston	Robin 2	Jun 7

MONSTER MAGNET

London	Camden Desertfest	May 6
Manchester	Gorilla	May 31
Glasgow	Garage	Jun 1
Belfast	Limelight	Jun 2
Dublin	Tivoli	Jun 3

NEWPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
KING KING, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, MORE

Newport	Neon	Jun 2

NICKELBACK, SEETHER

Glasgow	The Hydro	May 3
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 5
Liverpool	Echo Arena	May 7
Manchester	Arena	May 8
Birmingham	Genting Arena	May 10
London	O2 Arena	May 11
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	May 13

STEVIE NIMMO BAND

Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 7

OBITUARY

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 6
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Mar 7
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 8
Birmingham	Institute 2	Mar 9
London	Malet Street ULU	Mar 10

DAN PATLANSKY, MOLLIE MARRIOTT

Manchester	Deaf Institute	Mar 15
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 16

GETTY

Leek	Foxlowe Arts Centre	Mar 17
Bristol	The Tunnel	Mar 18
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 20
London	Manette Street Borderline	Mar 21

PEARL JAM

London	O2 Arena	Jun 18, 19

MIKE PETERS & THE ALARM

Glasgow	ABC	May 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 26

PREMIATA FORNERIA MARCONI

Southampton	1865	May 16
London	Islington Academy	May 17

KEN PUSTELNIK'S GROUNDHOGS, CROW BLACK CHICKEN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 24

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

London	O2 Arena	Jul 2

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, IGGY POP, THE HIVES, MORE

London	Finsbury Park	Jun 30

QUIREBOYS

Bedford	Esquires	Mar 17
Hull	Fruit	Mar 22
Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 23
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 24
Preston	Guildhall	Mar 25
Bristol	Thekla	Apr 6
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 7
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 12
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Apr 13
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 14
Aberdeen	The Assembly	Apr 20
Dundee	Church	Apr 21
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Apr 22

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
THE CULT, MOTT THE HOOPLE, HALESTORM, SONS OF APOLLO, STEEL PANTHER, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jun 30, Jul 1

DAN REED & DANNY VAUGHN

Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 1
Bedford	Esquires	Mar 2
London	Manette Street Borderline	Mar 3
Evesham	Iron Road	Mar 28
Cardiff	Fuel	Mar 30
Agohill	[N Ireland] The Diamond	Mar 31

REEF

Lincoln	Engine Shed	Apr 26
Hull	The Welly	Apr 27
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 28

CHRIS ROBINSON BROTHERHOOD

London	Malet Street ULU	Mar 16

ROCKIN' THE BLUES
ERIC GALES, QUINN SULLIVAN, GARY HOEY, LANCE LOPEZ

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 17

SEPULTURA

Bristol	SWX	Mar 13
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 14
Dublin	The Tivoli	Mar 15
Pwllheli	Hammerfest	Mar 16
Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 17
London	Camden Koko	Mar 18

IAN SIEGAL

London	Camden Jazz Café	Apr 11
Brighton	Komedia	Apr 12
Godalming	Wilfrid Noyce Centre	Apr 13
Devizes	Long St Blues Club	Apr 14
Teignmouth	Pavilions	Apr 15
Bristol	Tunnels	Apr 16
Poole	Mr Kyps	Apr 17
Cheltenham	Vonnies	Apr 18
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 19
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Apr 20
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Apr 21
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 22
Norwich	Arts Centre	Apr 24
Hull	Fruit	Apr 25
Sheffield	The Greystones	Apr 26

SKID ROW, TOSELAND, BAD TOUCH

Dublin	Academy	Mar 2
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 3
Glasgow	ABC	Mar 5
Inverness	Iron Works	Mar 6
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 7
Sheffield	Corporation	Mar 9
Pwllheli	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Mar 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 11
Hull	Welly	Mar 12
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 14
Cardiff	University	Mar 15
Liverpool	Hanger 34	Mar 16
Coventry	Kasbah	Mar 17
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 19
Bristol	Academy	Mar 20
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 21
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 22

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

After a short-lived hiatus, the boys are back to celebrate the tenth anniversary of *The '59 Sound* by playing it in full.

See opposite page for dates, currently July 20 to 25.

SKID ROW, NIGHT RANGER

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 11

SKINDRED, CKY

Norwich	UEA	Apr 19
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 21
Manchester	Academy	Apr 22
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 24
Bristol	Academy	Apr 25
Leeds	Academy	Apr 27
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 28
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 29

SPACE ELEVATOR

South Shields	Unionist	May 17
Bathgate	Dreadnought	May 18
Wigan	Old Courts Theatre	May 19
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 20
High Wycombe	Buckinghamshire University	May 24
London	The Hammersmith Club	May 25
Oxford	Bullingdon	May 31

STAMFORD BLUES, RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
GROUNDHOGS, PAUL LAMB & THE KING SNAKES, MORE

Stamford	Corn Exchange	Jun 16

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
GLENN HUGHES, BLACK STAR RIDERS, DAN REED NETWORK, THE QUIREBOYS, MORE

Ebbew Vale	Hafod-Y-Dafal Farm	Jul 27-29

STEREOPHONICS

Birmingham	Genting Arena	Mar 1
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 2
Bournemouth	BIC	Mar 5
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 6, 7
Manchester	Arena	Mar 9
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 10
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Mar 12
Wrexham	Racecourse Ground	Jun 2
Cardiff	City Stadium	Jun 9

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, RUTS DC

Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 9
Bristol	Academy	Mar 10
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 11
Manchester	Ritz Mar 13	
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 14
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 17
Inverness	Ironworks	Mar 18
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Mar 19
Reading	Sub 89	Mar 21
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 22
London	Kentish Town Forum	Mar 23
Leeds	Millennium Square	May 25
Hatfield	Forum	May 26
Birmingham	NEC Lakeside	May 27

STONE BROKEN, JARED JAMES NICHOLS, THE BAD FLOWERS

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 1
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Mar 2
Birmingham	Institute 2	Mar 3
Sheffield	Corporation	Mar 4
Chester	Live Rooms	Mar 6
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Mar 7

STONEDEAF FESTIVAL
SKID ROW, QUIREBOYS, ANVIL, MORE

Nottingham	Newark Showgrounds	Aug 25

STONE FREE FESTIVAL
SCORPIONS, YES: ANDERSON RABIN & WAKEMAN, MEGADETH, ROGER HODGSON, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Jun 16, 17

STONE SOUR

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 17
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jun 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 19

TANGERINE DREAM

London	Highbury Union Chapel	Apr 23

TAX THE HEAT

London	The Islington	Mar 9
Bristol	Rough Trade	Apr 7
Sheffield	Foundry Studio	Apr 19
Southampton	Heartbreakers	Apr 20
Birmingham	Flapper & Firkin	Apr 21
Brighton	Sticky Mike's Frog Bar	Apr 23
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Apr 24
Manchester	Night People	Apr 25
Newcastle	Jumpin' Jack's	Apr 28
Glasgow	Stereo	Apr 29
Hull	Polar Bear	Apr 30

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Aberdeen	Garage	Mar 2
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 3
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Mar 4
Sheffield	Academy	Mar 5
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Mar 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 8
London	Kentish Town Forum	Mar 9

TESTAMENT, ANNIHILATOR, VADER

Bristol	Motion	Mar 29
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 30
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 31
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 1
Glasgow	QMU	Apr 2
London	Camden Koko	Apr 4

THEE HYPNOTICS

Leicester	Soundhouse	Mar 31
Newcastle	The Cluny	Apr 1
Newport	Le Pub	Apr 4
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 5
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Apr 6
Manchester	Night People	Apr 7
Brighton	The Albert	Apr 8
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 11
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Apr 12
London	Walthamstow Mirth Marvel Maud	Apr 13
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 14
Ramsgate	Music Hall	Apr 15

THIRTY SECONDS TO MARS

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 23
Manchester	Arena	Mar 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 25
London	O2 Arena	Mar 27
Birmingham	Arena	Mar 29

TOTO

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 2
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 4
Belfast	Waterfront Auditorium	Apr 7
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Apr 8

TRINITY LIVE
STEVE ROTHERY, TOUCHSTONE, GHOST COMMUNITY, MORE

London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 12

TRIVIUM, CODE ORANGE, POWER TRIP, VENOM PRISON

Bristol	Academy	Apr 16
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 17
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 17
Manchester	Academy	Apr 20
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 21

TURBONEGRO

London	Camden Koko	Mar 2

Recommended

TURBOWOLF

Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 9
Glasgow	Stereo	Mar 10
Newcastle	Academy 2	Mar 11
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 13
London	King's Cross Scala	Mar 14
Bristol	Bierkeller	Mar 15

ROGER WATERS

Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 29
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Jul 2
Manchester	Arena	Jul 3
London	Hyde Park British Summer Time	Jul 6
Birmingham	Arena	Jul 7

WILDFIRE FESTIVAL
LIONHEART, MASSIVE WAGONS, BLACK CAT BONES, MORE

Lanarkshire	Biggar	Jun 22-24

DAMIAN WILSON & ADAM WAKEMAN

Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Mar 1
Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Mar 2
York	The Basement	Mar 4
Dumfries	Theatre Royal	Mar 5

STEVEN WILSON

Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Mar 15
Belfast	Mandela Hall	Mar 17
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Mar 19
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Mar 21
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Mar 24
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 25
London	Royal Albert Hall	Mar 27-29
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 31, Apr 1

WITHIN TEMPTATION

Birmingham	Academy	Nov 9
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 10
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 11
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 13

ANDREW WK

Cardiff	Great Hall	Apr 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 14
Birmingham	Academy 2	Apr 15
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 19
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21

YES

Bristol	Colston Hall	Mar 13
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 14
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Mar 16
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 17
Gateshead	The Sage	Mar 18
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 20
Brighton	Centre	Mar 21
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Mar 23
London	Palladium	Mar 24/25

ZODIAC MINDWARP & THE LOVE REACTION

London	New Cross Inn	May 19

GETTY

Xander & The Peace Pirates: confirming their growing reputation.

'Xander & The Peace Pirates' performance leaves jaws agape.'

The Great British Rock & Blues Festival

Skegness Butlins

Newcomers, old hands and vets deliver the good, the bad and the ordinary (not necessarily in that order) at this year's winter warmer by the sea.

More than 3,500 leather-rock and blues fans once again take over the Butlins holiday village, yet during the weekend we don't spot a single argument or bout of fisticuffs. The positive vibe complements the music, which takes place on two stages and at numerous satellite bars, and is mostly of a very high quality. The only real downer is the usual frustrating schedule clashes.

Screaming Eagles have the attitude and flimsily disguised AC/DC-ish biker boogie to get the party started. Comparatively speaking the Irishmen are mere youngsters, but apart for a rather grim dry-hump of Zeppelin's *Immigrant Song* they don't disgrace themselves too badly. On the Blues Stage the **Tom Walker Trio** turn out to be a five-piece. Go figure. Just as we arrive, sadly their set ends, with a smooth, jazzy take on the Stones' *Miss You*.

Vincent Crane and John Du Cann are both long gone, of course, but with a line-up revolving around 1970s members Peter French on vocals and deranged guitarist Steve Bolton, **Atomic Rooster** set the standard for all to match. Steeped in delicious gloomy Hammond organ, *Devil's Answer* and *Death Walks Behind You* defy the hi-di-hi mentality in all its forms. If Uriah Heep worshipped Satan they'd sound like this.

Without their ailing, iconic namesake, it's hard to take **Frankie Miller's Full House** seriously, especially as main lead vocalist Steve Whalley openly uses a crib sheet for the lyrics. Learn the bleedin' words!

It falls to **Rebecca Downes** to kick off Saturday's entertainment. Her blues is subtle and warm, but when she rocks out, with a new song called *Take Me Higher*, she sidesteps said niche with ease. We're not sure why **Southbound** are on the Rock Stage. The Londoners call their style "blues rock played with soul", but regrettably it all becomes very soporific.

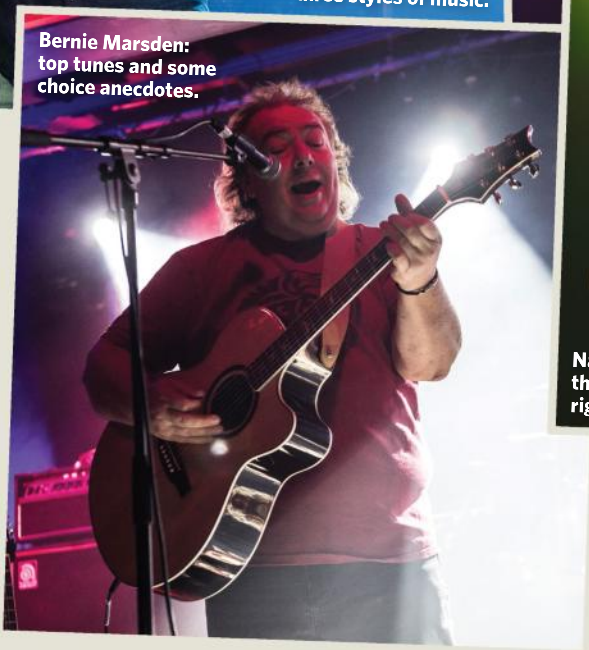
Screaming Eagles: getting the party started with some AC/DC-ish biker boogie.

Reunited with guitarist Vinny Burns and bassist Nigel Clutterbuck, Darren Wharton and **Dare** struggle manfully to juggle three styles of music: the AOR for which they became known in the 1980s, a heavier period and the Celtic-based sound of recent decades. They marry them best with *Sweet Surrender*, while from that first era *Abandon* and *Into The Fire* are glorious.

Former Whitesnake man **Bernie Marsden** performs alone to a huge early evening audience, the guitarist's

Dare: struggling manfully to juggle three styles of music.

Stray: using their allotted time wisely.



Bernie Marsden: top tunes and some choice anecdotes.

Nazareth: a set-list that ticks all the right boxes.

cheerful and gregarious nature creating an air of celebration. There are anecdotes about Jon Lord, Peter Green, Bobby Bland and, of course, David Coverdale, and covers of tunes by Bland, Green, Big Bill Broonzy and Hendrix peppering a set that includes *Trouble, The Time Is Right For Love, Lovehunter* along with the evergreen *Fool For Your Loving* and *Here I Go Again*. Let's start a campaign to get Marsden back with Cov, Micky Moody and Neil Murray – it would be like the Frantic Four all over again!

An excruciating moment arrives when the annoying deejay who constantly talks over his records mistakenly introduces the next act as "Roy Chapman". This is like a red rag to a bull for the ever-feisty **Roger Chapman**. "My name's not fucking Roy!" explodes Chappo, who's appearing here with current vehicle Friends And Family. Following the seemingly final dissolution of Family, the singer is having fun again with a more career-covering repertoire, including a trip back to the Streetwalkers with *Run For Cover*. His voice is no longer what it used to be, but sheer enthusiasm and the finesse of a crack backing band seals the day. A belligerent yet inspiring display ignites with a signal from side-stage that he's got just five more minutes left. "Just for the fucking fuck…", Chapman says, grinning, then tags *Shadow On The Wall* on to the end of *Burlesque* before encoring, appropriately, with the Family gem *In My Own Time*.

The so-called 'graveyard shift' – commencing at 11.15pm – goes to **Xander & The Peace Pirates**, whose growing reputation is confirmed by them attracting a sizeable audience. With plectrum attached to a prosthetic picking arm, Keith Xander is not only to be applauded for overcoming such a setback in life, he's also a great guitarist. His band are bluesy, with a soulful, slightly countrified edge, and tonight's performance by the band leaves jaws agape.

Sunday's program begins with something a little different. "This is modern blues – songs of our time, I hope," states **Edgar Broughton** before he commences a fascinatingly spiky one-man set. Broughton's voice unexpectedly elevates to an eerie yet somehow celebratory falsetto, but his between-song monologues are equally unsettling; in what seems gleeful fashion he introduces *The Sound Don't Come* with the tale of how "arch rival" Mick Farren died during a gig at the Borderline. How refreshing that at the ages of 70 and 66, Broughton and Marsden don't depend upon Marshall stacks, backing bands and dry ice to convey their legacies. Songs, words and charisma are all it takes, and both have plenty.

Two years ago, **Stray** celebrated their 50th anniversary by reuniting their original members at the Borderline. At Rock & Blues such nostalgia is unnecessary. Still led by the twinkle-eyed Del Bromham and with on-loan keyboard player Simon Rinaldo enriching the sound, their allotted hour is used wisely, with the band going back to 1971's *Suicide* for the rarely played *Son Of The Father*, while a volume-charged *All In Your Mind* reminds us why Iron Maiden felt the need to record their own version.

> **'The only real downer is the usual schedule clashes.'**

Resuming things and getting the momentum going again after the interval, the **Billy Walton Band** fuse guitar heroics with hard rock, blues sensibilities and, in an endearing twist that betrays their New Jersey origins, a horn section. It's kinda fun, and they go down far better than expected.

Around the corner at Jak's Bar, **Roadhouse** are doing their usual sassy thing. Their format has been honed over thousands of gigs and the band have become staples of these events. An admission from guitarist Gary Boner speaks volumes about the required commitment levels, when he informs us that Roadhouse pressed 25 copies of an anthology released last year to commemorate a quarter-century of existence, and "we've still got thirteen left".

Carl Sentance has been **Nazareth**'s lead singer since 2015. With bassist Pete Agnew the only remaining original member, the Scottish band have nevertheless pressed on, and this year marks their fiftieth anniversary. Of course it isn't the same without Dan McCafferty, who retired in 2013, but Sentance's voice is developing the necessary gruffness, and the current set-list – nothing released later than 1977 – ticks all the right boxes. An all-new studio record that's being prepared will freshen things up a little, too.

It's fitting that **Chantel McGregor** brings this year's Skegness weekend event to a close, as the Yorkshire lass has a (bare) foot in the worlds of both rock and blues. A confident performance includes the space-rock epic *April*, while the hard hitting *Burn Your Anger, Lose Control* and *I'm No Good For You* suggest that McGregor is gradually shedding her reputation as just a blues guitarist/vocalist.

Words: **Dave Ling** Photos **Kevin Nixon**

'There's a 'no drink' rule. Then a latecomer arrives with some tins.'

PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS

Location – YouTube Space London
Date – January 26th 2018

Big Mouth
Get On Your Knees

Welcome To Hell
Freak Show
Born To Raise Hell

Dark Days Drop C

Ringleader
Silver Machine

Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons

London YouTube Space Studios

It's a family affair for the Motörhead man and his boys.

It's unusual, but hardly rare, to find bands where it's a partial family affair. We've had Heart and the Allman Brothers with two siblings, and even the Von Hertzen Brothers with three of the buggers. Moreover, there are those bands with a father and son, for instance Van Halen (Eddie and his kid Wolfgang) and Cheap Trick (the Nielsens Rick and Daxx). But this... well, it takes the idea of 'The family that slays together, stays together' to an entirely new level with Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons. There's big daddy Phil of course on guitar, plus his *three* sons Todd (guitar), Dane (drums) and Tyla (bass). With that array you could make a real case for claiming this is The Partridge Family with steel riffage.

"Actually, some people have compared us to The Jacksons and The Osmonds," chuckles Phil. "I don't mind that at all, especially as I borrowed the riff from the latter's *Crazy Horses* for *Deaf Forever*!"

It might seem slightly convenient that the Campbell offspring should neatly play guitar, bass and drums. Their father is quick to point out that it was never premeditated. "We've always had music in the house. And all three of them can play a variety of instruments."

"I used to play guitar quite well," adds Tyla. "But Todd is older than me, so he grabbed the guitar and I had to move to bass."

"And that left me as the drummer," sighs Dane. "But I'm fine with that. We could all swap instruments if we wanted to. There are never any arguments over who does what."

The one position that had to move outside the family is that of vocalist. Simply because there was no candidate from the Campbell clan.

"Our mum can't sing," admits Dane. "Nor do any of our cousins. We might have a dog or two who could do the job, but I doubt that would've been practical."

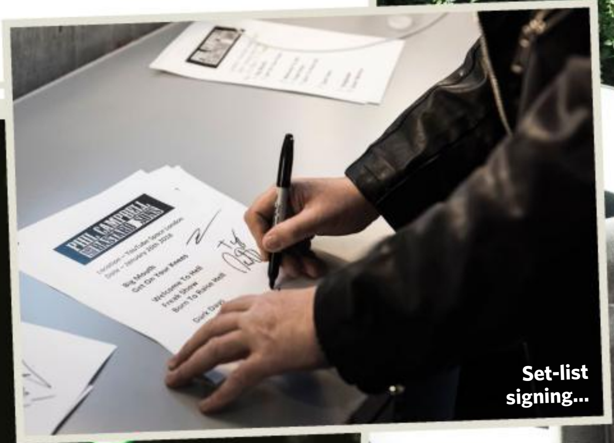
So, their singer is Neil Starr, who's far from being a stranger anyway. "I've known these guys for a long time," he admits. "And so didn't have a problem fitting in. There's never been a situation where I've felt excluded because I'm not part of the family."

"You could always change your name to Campbell," interjects Phil, trying to be helpful.

"Oh, would that mean I'd get more money?" challenges Starr.

Phil pauses thoughtfully for a nanosecond, before giving the expected one word response: "No!"

The band first got together at a birthday party.



Set-list signing...

Campbell with vocalist Neil Starr an drummer Dane.

"Fancy a museum after this, Phil?" "Hell, yeah!"

A Bastard Sons 'hello'.

"It was Todd's birthday," says Tyla. "And that's when we all got up and jammed. We asked Neil along to sing, and now we're stuck with him."

"Out first proper gig was at Bogiez in Cardiff," remembers Phil. "And since then we've done some very interesting gigs. For instance, we played in a vineyard owned by a friend of ours. And then there was a show we did recently on a boat in Nancy, France. That was a very strange experience."

"There were a lot of heavy bands on the bill before us," recalls Dane. "But this was a very small boat, and it seemed as if we were playing a village fête. And when we finally got onstage, we didn't have any lighting, so we were pretty much playing in the dark. There were people everywhere watching us – the boat was moored, and we could see people on the bridge above us. It was very weird, but quite cool."

Given that this is essentially a dad on the road with his three sons, you might expect Phil to be keeping a close eye on what his offspring get up to on tour. But it would appear this isn't necessary. "I'm usually in bed very early these days," he says. "But I know the boys are getting up to nothing debauched at all. If you come on our tour bus, all you'll see is slippers everywhere. Well, maybe rum and slippers..."

"And just the occasional slice of cheese," adds Tyla. "No, we're not a band who get up to all sorts of madness when we are touring. You're more likely to find us going to museums than taking all the drugs you could mention."

Hang on, these guys are trying to convince us that they frequent places of culture and history rather than being found in bars getting hysterical. And Phil Campbell, once of Motörhead, is okay with this calmness?

"Some people have compared us to The Osmonds. I did borrow the riff to *Crazy Horses*."

"I used to go occasionally to museums when I was with Motörhead. Always by myself, though. Lem went off to see military stuff, and Mickey Dee was never interested. But with this band... well, we've been to three major museums over the past few weeks. Not what you're expecting to hear, eh?"

Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons are not at a museum this evening. They're limbering up for an album launch show at the state-of-the-art YouTube Space in London, where their 30-minute performance will be streamed live on label Nuclear Blast's YouTube channel and also the band's own.

"We wanted to do something to mark the release of our album, *The Age Of Absurdity*," explains Dane. "We did think of doing a club show, but that would only be for about a couple of hundred people. So, then the idea came up of streaming the set live, so a lot more can see it."

There are only about 30 fans present in the intimate studio setting, invited through Facebook.

"We put the word out through there and it was first come, first served," says Tyla. "But we do have fans coming from all over the UK."

One diehard has travelled up from South Wales, and his story shows real dedication. "I left work at 8am today, went home, ducked my head in the shower, then got on a National Express coach to London. And I've got to get on the 11.30 coach back tonight, and go straight to work. But I wouldn't miss this for anything."

Due to the hugely expensive camera and audio equipment throughout the studio, there's an understandable 'no food and drink' policy enforced. This is politely explained to everyone before the performance. And the announcement is met with a disappointed silence. Until, that is, one latecomer walks in brandishing several cans of beer, which are handed around to eager and thirsty people. There's little officialdom can do under the circumstances, so that 'no drink' rule goes right into the bin.

"This is Phil Campbell," explains one guzzling man. "I've never watched him without a beer in my hand!"

At least the insistence of no stage-diving holds firm. But then, given the small size of the stage and its lack of height, you'd have to be bonkers to even try a dive.

As everyone waits for the clock to tick round to the planned start of the broadcast, there's an uncanny silence inside the studio. By contrast, as everyone arrives, the album is being piped around the building at a healthy volume, which helps kickstart the atmosphere. But now, everything seems almost eerie.

‘Starr never mimics Lemmy’s vocals, adding his own perky snap.’

Just one finger away from the “Fuck you, Tyla” salute.

“You sing it, Malc, I’ll play it.” Stepping up *with* the mic, *CR*’s very own Malcolm Dome.

“I have never seen a crowd of metal fans so quiet,” one fan acknowledges. And we wonder whether this will be the sort of occasion that falls flat, because it’s such a different and controlled environment. However, as the band amble onto the stage, there’s a huge roar, everyone relaxes, and it’s game on.

Earlier, the five had seemed very disciplined and tight as they ran through a brief soundcheck. Although, it did get slightly odd when Tyla turned to Phil and said, “Dad, shall we run through *Silver Machine*?”. “*Dad*“ – that brought home the family connection.

Now, unleashed in front of genuine fans, the band forget about the cameras poking out and roving everywhere. The crowd take their cue from those onstage, really getting into the rousing rock’n’roll ride.

Given the fact that the whole event is about promoting the just released album, much of the short set features songs from the record. These come across with real passion and class. *Freak Show* has the sort of cranked up adrenalin soaked riff that could easily make it an anthem, and *Dark Days* showcases Starr’s street cred-fuelled vocal style.

Throughout, the two guitarists trade off each with a complementing flair, and when Phil delivers a solo it’s done with the sense that you’re privileged to be watching one of the best guitarists in the world.

“I have really worked at my craft over the past few years,” Phil revealed earlier. “I began to put the hours into practising, because I knew I was in danger of repeating myself. I just wanted to come up with a fresh approach, and I think it’s been working.”

Dark Days is the song that marks out what Phil Campbell and his Bastards want to do. It has hints of Motörhead terrain, but pushes this influence into more thoughtful landscape. It has an epic appeal that suits what the band can do. But they can still blaze with the best, as is proven on the accelerating *Ringleader*.

There’s one odd moment, when Starr gets everyone to hold up their middle finger and shout, “Fuck you, Tyla!” This seems to have become a tradition for the band at every show. However, the set finishes with two covers. *Born To Raise Hell* takes Phil back into his distinguished and lengthy career with the almighty Motörhead, while Hawkwind’s *Silver Machine* also pays tribute to the legacy of Lemmy. And so the cameras stop rolling. But wait, there’s more...

“A lot of people who’ll be here have come a long distance,” says Phil. “So, we will give them a little bit more. It’s the least we can do.”

The band duly tuck into a brace of additional Motörhead anthems, leading off with *Going To Brazil*, before Dane races through his kit for the unmistakable intro to *Ace Of Spades*. Whatever you do with this, nothing can compare to the way it was done by you-know-who. However, Starr never mimics Lemmy’s trademark vocals, adding his own perky snap, while Todd and his dad trade off each other with a huge appetite for explosive guitar signatures.

However, while the band disappear into their dressing room area, it’s only a brief break; they’re quickly back to mingle with the fans, chat and pose for selfies. No precious egos here. This is born out when Starr self-deprecatingly asks one fan, “There are so many good bands out there. Why on earth do you like us?” The answer’s simple. Two words. “Phil Campbell.”

But this is not a vehicle for him to show off his undoubted quality. It has gelled into a formidable band, who are rapidly becoming a tireless force. But where did that name come from?

“We were originally called Phil Campbell’s All Starr Band,” explains Phil. “We did covers only. Then when Lemmy died, I wanted us to start doing our own material, so we wanted to change the name, and then he [pointing at Starr] came up with this!”

“It was meant to be a joke,” insists Starr. “But everyone seemed to like this idea, so it stuck.”

“When I told my wife what we were gonna call the band, she wouldn’t talk to me for three days,” laughs Phil. “But it made sense, because Lemmy wanted to call the band Bastard before settling on Motörhead. And everyone who was ever in that band was a bastard. Maybe it should be Phil Campbell And The *Bastard’s* Sons!”

Words: **Malcolm Dome** Photos: **Will Ireland**

Phil always gets excited doing the meet-and-greets.

"Band Of The Week"
Great Music Stories
"Single Of The Week"
RAMzine
"Ones To Watch"
Planet Rock
The Rocket Dolls
Live
6 April SOUTHAMPTON, The Firehouse
7 April WORTHING, Bar 42
10 April SHEFFIELD, West Street Live
11 April NEWCASTLE, Trillians Rock Bar
12 April EDINBURGH, Bannermans
13 April GLOSSOP, The Globe
14 April BIRMINGHAM, The Hammer & The Anvil
15 April NORTHAMPTON, The King Billy Rock Bar
19 April SWANSEA, Creature Sound
20 April WEYMOUTH, Finns
21 April LONDON, Dublin Castle
26 May BRIGHTON, Sticky Mike's Frog Bar
4 Aug HASTINGS, Black Market VIP
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KING KING
EXILE & GRACE TOUR
"ONCE AGAIN KING KING SHOWS WHY THEY'RE ONE OF THE FINEST BLUES ROCK BANDS IN THE WORLD"
BLUES ROCK REVIEW 9/10
KING KING
EXILE & GRACE
APRIL
14TH HUNTINGDON HALL WORCESTER
15TH HRH BLUES FESTIVAL SHEFFIELD
20TH THE LEMON TREE ABERDEEN
21ST DARVEL FESTIVAL DARVEL
MAY
3RD ST MARY IN THE CASTLE HASTINGS
4TH MUNI ARTS CENTRE PONTYPRIDD
5TH 1865 SOUTHAMPTON
10TH THE EPSTEIN THEATRE LIVERPOOL
11TH THE PLAYHOUSE WHITLEY BAY
12TH THE GRAND CLITHEROE
17TH THE LIVE ROOMS CHESTER
18TH BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB LEEDS
19TH THE PICTUREDROME HOLMFIRTH
26TH THE CHEESE & GRAIN FROME
27TH THE PHOENIX EXETER
31ST THE ROBIN 2 BILSTON
JUNE
1ST THE APEX BURY ST EDMUNDS
2ND ROCK & BLUES FESTIVAL NEWPORT
WWW.KINGKING.CO.UK

Shane MacGowan 60th Birthday Celebration

National Concert Hall Dublin

A stellar line-up gather to celebrate the punk-folk icon's life in song.

★ Jesse Malin kicks the night into touch with an exhilarating *That Woman Got Me Drinking* enhanced by the stellar line-up of Clem Burke, Spider Stacy and Glen Matlock. Next up Carl Barât has a crack at *If I Should Fall From Grace With God*, giving further affirmation of the punk Behan's influence on subsequent generations weaned on his London/Irish sagas. The Libertine also does a convincing *London Girl*, making it his own. Dublin's Damien Dempsey rattles through *Streams Of Whiskey* at a canter while Cerys Matthews' affecting *Broad Majestic Shannon* is dedicated to Dolores O'Riordan not long after news of her death.

The house band includes Pogues' Cáit O'Riordan, Terry Edwards, Jem Finer and Waterboys fiddler Steve Wickham. They back Bobby Gillespie while he leads the crowd with arms outstretched through *A Pair Of Brown Eyes* with spine-tingling results. Johnny Depp channels his best Keef while striking up an enchanting chemistry with Bono whose voice is on potent form during *A Rainy Night In Soho*. Nick Cave and MacGowan previously recorded a memorable *What A Wonderful World*. Reunited tonight to perform the enigmatic *Summer In Siam* their voices and presence create another spellbinding encounter. Shane conjures a poignant *Wild Mountain Thyme* to end the celebration – perhaps Jesse Malin puts it best when he says: "He's our Sinatra."

Richard Purden

'Cave and MacGowan's presence creates a spellbinding encounter.'

Irish President Michael D Higgins shows a nation's appreciation.

Reunited: MacGowan with Nick Cave.

Pistol packin': Glen Matlock.

Shame

London 100 Club

This is the sound of the suburbs.

★ When you see a clean-shaven, well-groomed young man in a tweed jacket, shirt and tie, velvet flares and espadrilles, stagediving into the moshpit of London's most famous punk rock venue, you know you're at no ordinary rock show. And for once, the intrepid reveller is not Charlie Steen, singer of South London punk urchins Shame, who has a penchant for both formal dress and vacating stages headfirst.

Shame's debut album *Songs Of Praise* has injected some much-needed anarchic energy and sardonic spittle into the increasingly bland indie-rock genre. And live, you quickly realise that they're not just paying curled-lip service to that idea. The menacing gothic growl of *Dust On Trial* and the brooding bass crawl of *The Lick*, allied to Steen's whisper-to-a-bellow vocal, resembles a charity shop Killing Joke, but there's a furious urgency to *Concrete*'s tale of romantic paranoia as Steen howls painfully, '*And is she with you noooow?*'

By the time they bow out with the louche, snarling *Gold Hole*, Steen is stripped to the waist, hanging off the roof beams having his nipples tweaked by over-enthusiastic admirers, while the four musicians behind him, barely out of their teens, lurch and stomp in hungry pursuit of every ragged riff. Beer, second-hand clothing and sticky footwear go flying in all directions. Simple rock'n'roll pleasures, served up in refreshingly idiosyncratic style.

Johnny Sharp

The Fuzztones

London 100 Club

Veteran NYC garage gang go ape.

★ The chrome hand of progress may have wiped out pretty much every rock'n'roll landmark in the West End, but in the 100 Club's sticky-floored cellar its troglodyte spirit lives on.

Dressed in matching denim jackets sheared off at the shoulders, these gnarled New York legends have the look of garage rock chain gang seeing out a life sentence. "Hey you guys!" growls near-mythical frontman Rudi Protrudi as a brutalist cover of Davie Allan & the Arrows' *Blues Theme* sends the front row into a frugging frenzy, while a quickfire *Caught You Red Handed* and *Bad News Travels Fast* are delivered with paint-stripping intensity, added lascivious effect provided by crazed keyboardist Nico Secondini poking his tongue out.

A ferocious cover of Screaming Lord Sutch's *Jack The Ripper* and Bevis Frond's *I've Got Eyes In The Back Of My Head* are nods to the band's appreciation of their surroundings, and the pace only lets up when Protrudi – now 65 – acknowledges that a lifetime's commitment to the cause has taken its toll. "I need to take a breath… I've already lost my voice," he gasps before a sizzling finale of *1-2-5, Action Speaks Louder Than Words* and *She's Wicked*.

Feedback roars, the crowd goes ape. Rock'n'roll may appear to be dying out on street level, but on nights like this, you sense its subterranean heart will beat forever.

Paul Moody

Jim Jones And The Righteous Mind

London Dingwalls

It's testifying time again.

★ A late-night show, performed without the benefit of a soundcheck at a far-from-full venue is hardly the stuff of rock dreams, but, in the best possible sense, Jim Jones and his motley collection of refuseniks who form The Righteous Mind don't care. "We're chomping at the bit to play,", he hollers, before slipping into the opening *Boil Yer Blood* and its skullbusting partner *No Fool*, both built upon furious, almost primal riffs which takes the feral, garagey sound of the Jim Jones Revue one almighty step further. With his suit slightly too tight, hair akimbo and occasional digressions into cheery anti-fascist singalongs, Jones is part carney, part defrocked prophet at one with the sweaty scuzziness around him. Needless to say, he's as watchable as *Peaky Blinders* and still the toughest of cookies. While there's less of a gang swagger to The Righteous Mind than the Revue, Jones is broadening his palette and when he growls his way through *Hold Up*, backed only by percussion, maracas and handclaps, the result is something midway between King Trigger's *River* and PiL's *Flowers Of Romance*. It ends with the traditional tsunami that is *Alphashit*: guitars are held aloft, but, after 50 thunderous, flab-free minutes, there is no encore, despite the loudly hollered demands. Short, sharp and wild.

John Aizlewood

MARK STEADMAN

'Perfect in just about every way' ★★★★★ THE TIMES

THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW

1988 2018

TIME

30 YEARS OF CELEBRATING PINK FLOYD

NOVEMBER 2018

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SAT 10 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
MON 12 SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION
TUE 13 MARGATE WINTER GARDENS
THU 15 BIRMINGHAM ARENA
FRI 16 BOURNEMOUTH INTL CENTRE
SAT 17 BRIGHTON CENTRE
MON 19 GUILDFORD G LIVE
TUE 20 READING HEXAGON
THU 22 STOKE VICTORIA HALL
FRI 23 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
SAT 24 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
MON 26 BATH FORUM
TUE 27 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
WED 28 SCUNTHORPE BATHS HALL
FRI 30 PRESTON GUILD HALL

DECEMBER 2018

SAT 01 GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
SUN 02 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
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THU 06 LIVERPOOL ECHO ARENA
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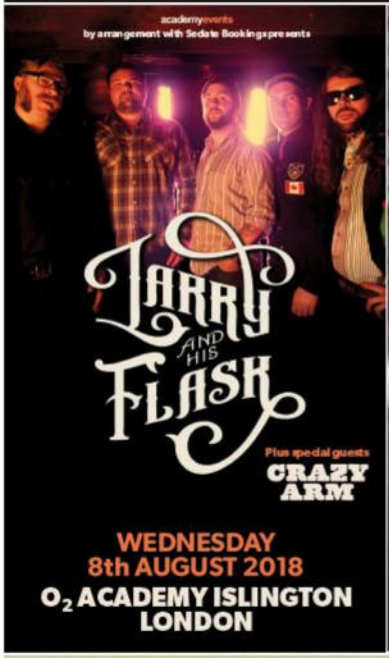

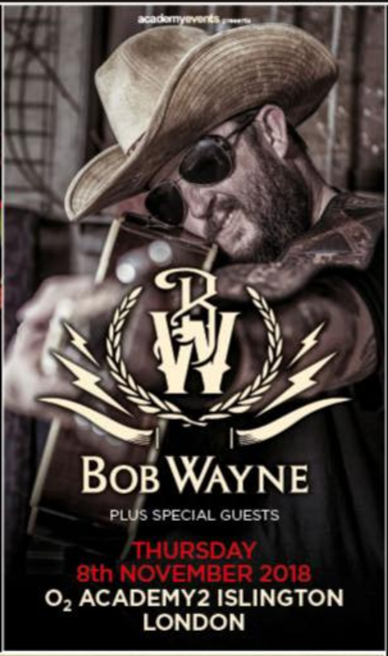

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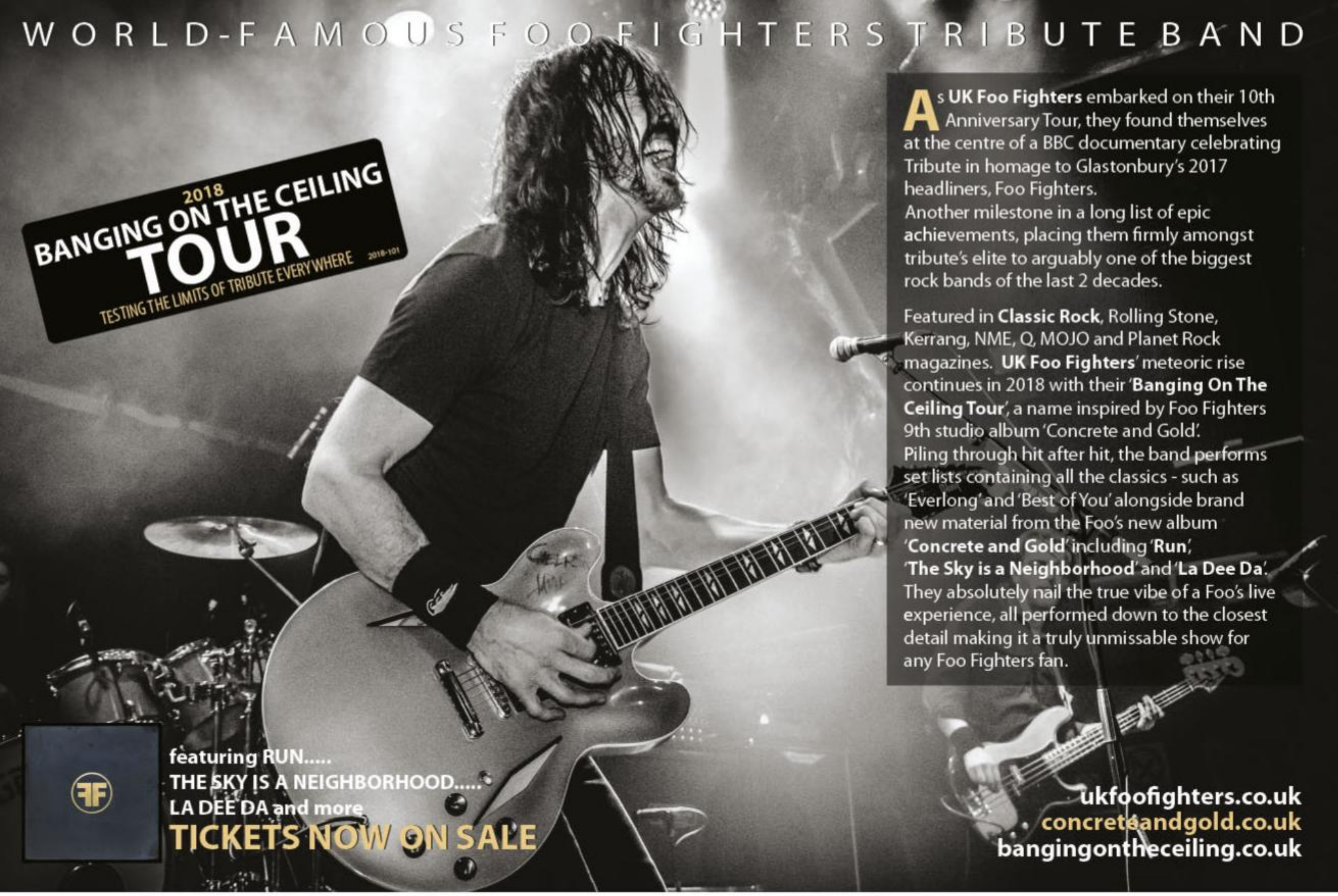

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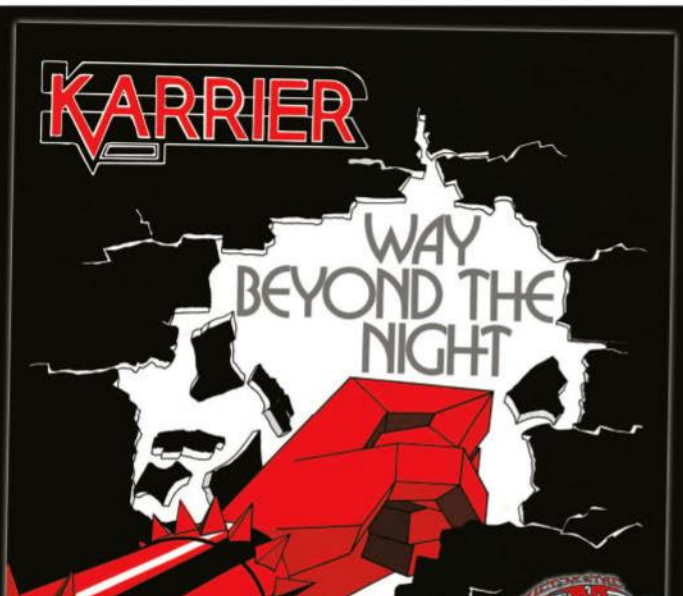

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Heavy Load

Heavy questions for heavy rockers

Former Police man **Stewart Copeland** on Policemania, new band Gizmodrome, punk, polo and crying at TV ads.

Interview: **Paul Lester**

Stewart Copeland – Curved Air roadie-to-drummer, Police drummer, film and videogame scorer, opera composer… – has a varied CV and then some. And now he's dived back into rock'n'roll as part of Gizmodrome, the new supergroup that also includes Level 42 bassist Mark King, King Crimson guitarist Adrian Belew and prog keyboard player Vittorio Cosma. Tonight, though, he's looking forward to an informal session at his home studio in LA with "a couple of chuckle buddies". "I rig my studio up so they can just plug in, then I record everything that moves," he tells us. "The next day I see what I've got and put the results up on YouTube."

How do Messrs King, Cosma and Belew compare to Sting and Andy Summers?
Mark has a very similar timbre to his voice. When he's in the booth it's like: "Fuck, that's a familiar sound!" And the MO is very similar to The Police: we hear the song for the first time, and twenty minutes later we've recorded it, hence the freshness and urgency.

How does the emotional dynamic of the two bands compare?
Oh, there there's no overlap at all. The Police is a very harsh place. With Level 42, King Crimson and The Police, the mission is to conquer the world. That's not our plan with Gizmodrome, it's a laugh.

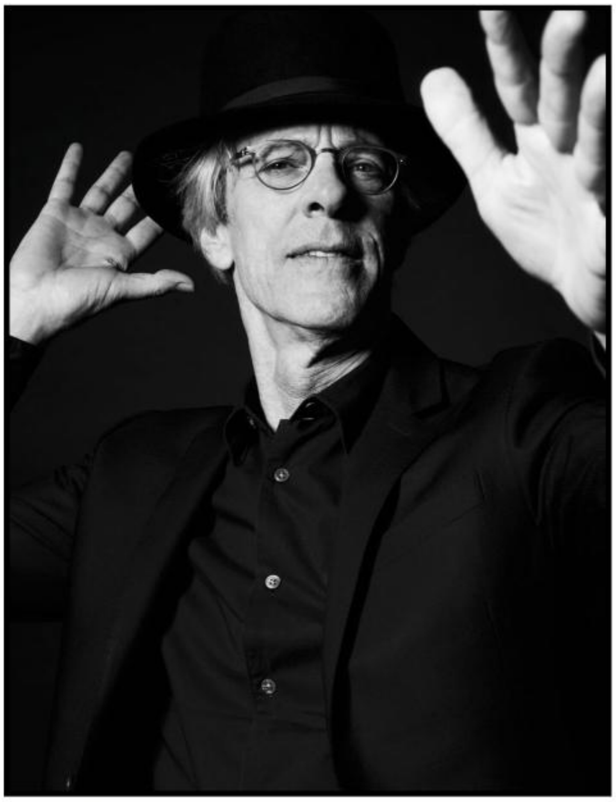
What's the most impressive thing you've ever done?
Figuring out how to write for a giant orchestra. That's the scariest thing I've ever done. The thing I'm most chuffed about, too, cos it seemed like such a high mountain to climb. I've written several concerti and played with orchestras all around the world. That's what I do now. This rock'n'roll thing came and got me back in there by mistake.

Didn't you admit to Steve Jones of the Sex Pistols that The Police "stole punk rock from their juvenile grasp"?
We've laughed about that since. He said: "You can give me money." I said [Dick Van Dyke cockernee], "Fuck off. I'll buy you a beer."

Did the punks know about your secret past as a public schoolboy?
No. But we were already dodgy before you even got to the public school background: there was Curved Air to deal with, and Andy Summers with Soft Machine and the skeletons in his cupboard.

You once said The Police were bigger than The Beatles…
I never said any such thing! People might have described us as "the Beatles of the eighties", and I might have glibly said, "The Beatles were The Police of the sixties", which is the kind of thing you say when you're a young c**t. We never achieved Beatledom. I don't think any band has, except for the Stones, perhaps.

When was the peak of Policemania?
Playing Shea Stadium [in 1983] was big, because even though I'm a septic tank [cockney rhyming slang for 'Yank'], The Police is an English band and I'm a Londoner – an American Londoner – so it felt like conquering America. Then there was the night [in 1979] when we drove in an armoured military vehicle from our show at the Hammersmith Odeon to another the same night at the Hammersmith Palais while the people from both concerts were all on the street. .



"This rock'n'roll thing came and got me back in there by mistake."

Do you believe in God?
Agnostic.

Which are the best and worst drugs you've ever taken?
I've had some of my best ideas at the dentist with laughing gas. And back in the day, somebody had some brown powder and they went: "Here, snort this," and I immediately felt sick and shitty. I believe it was heroin.

What was your biggest waste of money?
I spent a lot of money on polo, but I don't regret it. It was an incredible exposure to a really engrossing activity, it kept me really fit and it took me round the world.

What are you proudest of?
My kids.

Do you have more of your archeologist mum's or your CIA dad's DNA?
An equal mix. I'm kind of a nerd, but my father's balderdash I picked up a lot.

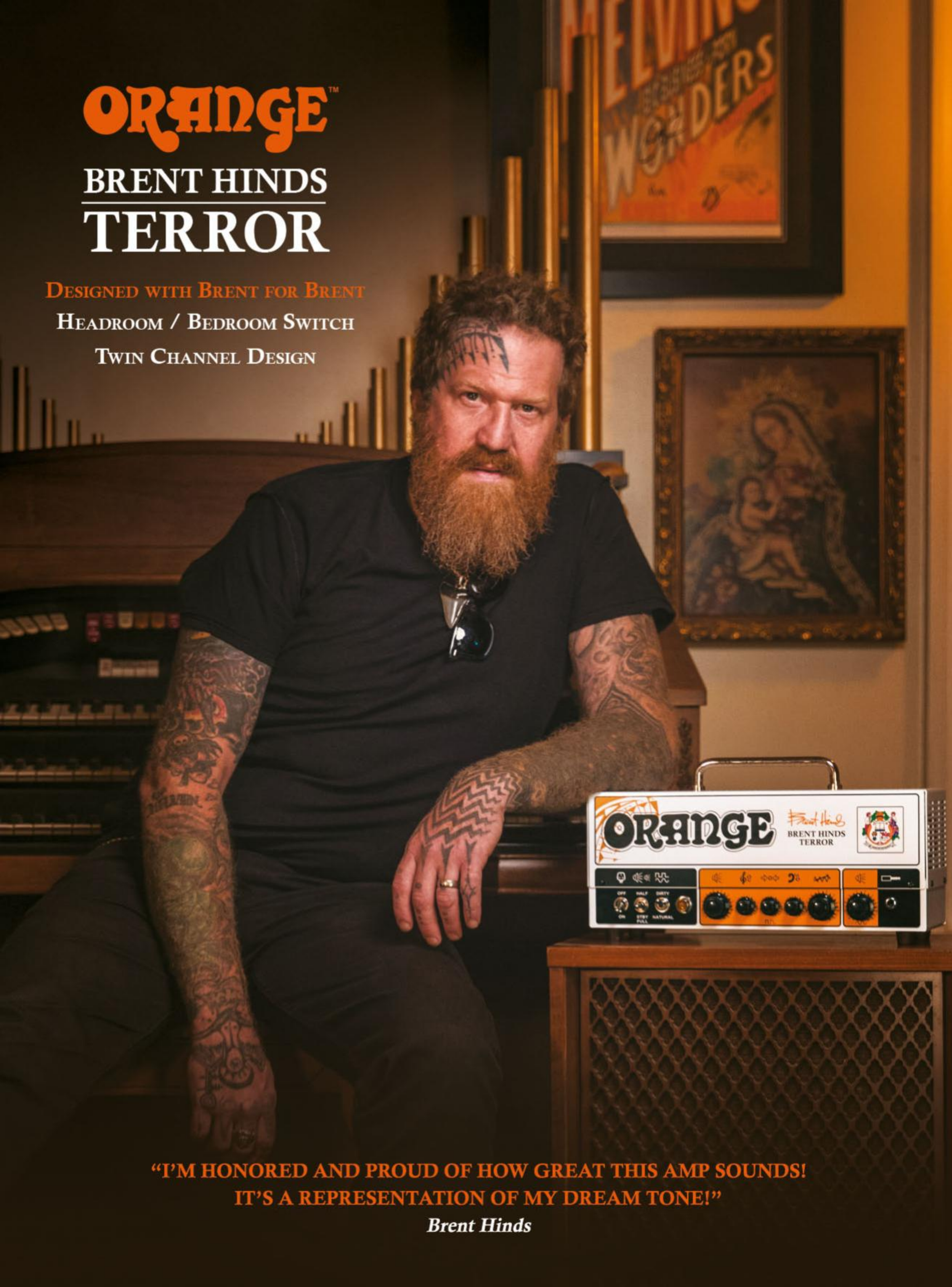
What last made you cry?
A dog food commercial. You get more sentimental with advancing years. My wife and I sit there holding hands, watching some intense series on TV, then it cuts to a commercial involving a loyal dog and I'm weeping like a baby.

What was your biggest pay day?
I did a logo for Blackberry. They just wanted a five-note tune. The fee they paid me for those five notes, each note would put one of my kids through college for a year.

What will you have on your tombstone?
Good question. But I don't have a good answer for it.

The self-titled album by Gizmodrome is out now. The band play London King's Cross Scala on March 7.

MASSIMILIANO CARDELLI/PRESS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